



ROCKVILLE'S PIKE:
ENVISION A GREAT PLACE

Rockville's Pike: DRAFT Stakeholder Workshop Report

Rockville's Pike: Envision a Great Place is a planning initiative that is designed to involve members of the Rockville community in developing a vision for the future of the Pike. This report summarizes the results from the public Stakeholder Workshop held on February 26, 2008. The report is divided into four parts:

Part 1: Workshop Overview provides a description of the meeting's activities and briefly summarizes the Workshop outcomes.

Part 2: Presentation highlights the main points from the consultant's presentation, which focused on the emerging themes that came out of the Kick-Off Meeting.

Part 3: Table Exercises summarize the small group table activities from the Workshop.

Part 4: Key Themes and Emerging Principles summarize the major themes that emerged from the Workshop, and presents a series of preliminary development principles.

Part 5: Exit Questionnaire provides details about who participated in the Workshop.

ABOVE: Participants engaged in a facilitated small group exercise at the Stakeholder Workshop.

Four appendices are included at the end of this report:

- Appendix A: Meeting Materials (City to provide final versions)
- Appendix B: Responses – Good Places, Bad Places mapping exercise
- Appendix C: Responses – Participant Recommendation Cards
- Appendix D: Responses – Critical Questions exercise

Part 1: Workshop Overview

Meeting Activities

The Stakeholder Workshop for *Rockville's Pike: Envision a Great Place* took place on February 26, 2008 from 7:00 – 9:30 pm at the Legacy Hotel Meeting Centre on Rockville Pike (formerly the Ramada Inn). The purpose of the meeting was to share the results of identifying physical strengths and weaknesses along the Pike, and gather additional input related to critical issues that emerged from the public input at the December Kick-Off Meeting. The Stakeholder Workshop attracted the participation of approximately 100 individuals from in and around Rockville.

Following introductory comments from City Manager Scott Ullery and Mayor Susan Hoffmann, the Workshop was divided into three main parts:

1. **Presentation: What have we learned so far?** - The consultant team provided an overview of the major themes to emerge from the December Kick-Off Meeting and outlined an emerging vision for the Pike. A detailed description of the presentation can be found in Part 2 of this report.
2. **Table Exercise 1: Good Places, Bad Places** - This exercise engaged small groups of participants in mapping “good” and “bad” places along the Pike, and providing details of what makes them good or bad. The participants used what they learned to develop recommendations for the future of the Pike. An analysis of the input gathered through this exercise can be found in Part 3 of this report.
3. **Table Exercise 2: Critical Questions** - This small group exercise involved a facilitated small group discussion designed to provide further details about some of the key issues that need to be addressed in a plan for the Pike. Analysis of the input gathered through this exercise can be found in Part 4 of this report.

The meeting concluded with a 45 minute reporting period that gave the small groups an opportunity to share the results of their Table Exercises with the full assembly

Ultimately, the Stakeholder Workshop has given the consulting team clear directives from the community about how the Pike could be transformed. The results of the Workshop have been used to draft a series of preliminary development principles, which are discussed in Part 4 of this report.



Participants engaged in a facilitated small group exercise.

Part 2: Presentation

Gianni Longo of ACP Visioning + Planning gave a brief presentation to share the results from the December 4th Kick-Off Meeting. The presentation was organized in terms of three overarching themes:

- **Promoting Suitable Development** – Rockville residents believe that strong, successful retail must be retained on the Pike. They are particularly interested in preserving the community’s unique local retail establishments. Kick-Off participants also expressed a desire for additional uses along the Pike, including housing, entertainment, and civic spaces.
- **Improving Transportation** – Rockville residents are very concerned about traffic congestion on the Pike. They expressed a desire to create an environment that is much more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and suggested ways to improve public transportation along the Pike. Participants also raised issues related to de-emphasizing parking and enhancing pedestrian and roadway connectivity along the Pike.
- **Creating a Unique Sense of Place** – Kick-Off participants noted that the Pike currently lacks a clear sense of identity. They cited concerns about prominent surface parking, lack of green or public space, negative environmental impacts, and challenges related to wayfinding and signage. They also expressed a desire to improve architectural quality along the Pike.

With these three overarching themes in mind, ACP proposed a preliminary vision for the future of the Pike:

Rockville’s Pike maintains a strong retail identity and supports local businesses while integrating a mix of uses including housing and entertainment. It is a walkable area that successfully accommodates a variety of transportation options (pedestrians, cars, bicycles, buses, rail, etc.). The Pike features a boulevard feel with trees and landscaping, vibrant civic spaces, attractive architecture, and environmentally sensitive development.

This vision for the future of the Pike will be further refined as the public process for *Rockville’s Pike* continues. The complete PowerPoint presentation used at the Kick-Off is available on the project website, at <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/rockvillespike/>.

Part 3: Table Exercises

Table Exercise 1: Good Places, Bad Places Exercise

Following the presentation, participants engaged in a small group facilitated exercise known as “Good Places, Bad Places.” This activity gave participants the opportunity to identify and map some of the physical characteristics of the Pike. Each table focused on one of five topics – Commercial Areas, Community Appearance, Driving and Parking, Living on the Pike, and Walking. They received a topic prompt that encouraged

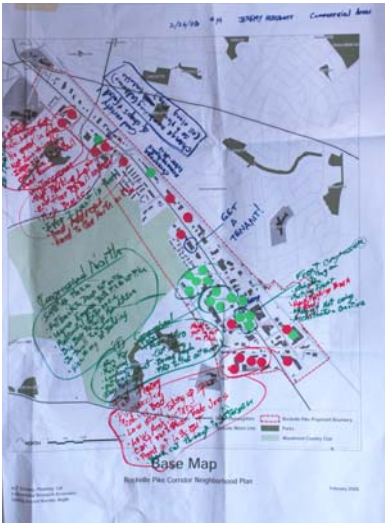
them to consider the good and bad places on the Pike in relation to their topic. Using a large table map, participants each placed three green dots to designate those places they considered to be good, and three red dots to designate those places they considered to be bad. The facilitator helped the participants identify which places had the largest clusters of green or red dots, and then led a discussion about the physical characteristics of these places.

The results for each of the five topics are summarized below. A complete set of comments and maps can be found in Appendix B.

Commercial Areas: The three tables that addressed this topic considered which commercial areas reflect well on the community, and are desirable to visit. They also identified commercial areas that reflect poorly on the community and are less desirable to visit. Their results are as follows:

Good Places – The Congressional shopping centers – Congressional Plaza, Congressional North, and Congressional Village were mentioned as being examples of good commercial areas along the Pike. Wintergreen Plaza was also noted. Participants cited accessibility, diversity of stores, mix of uses, proximity to Metro, easy parking, trees, landscaping, good maintenance, and sidewalks as some of the qualities that make these areas good places to shop.

Bad Places – Properties on the eastern side of the Pike were more likely to be designated as bad commercial areas, particularly areas in the northern part of the study area above Edmonston. Best Buy, Federal Plaza, and Ritchie center were also noted as having negative characteristics. Participants cited big box stores, too much pavement, lack of walkability, lack of connectivity, difficult parking, ugly architecture, lack of green, and difficult intersections as being some of the qualities that make these bad places to shop.



A sample table map from the Good Places, Bad Places exercise. This table examined Commercial Areas.

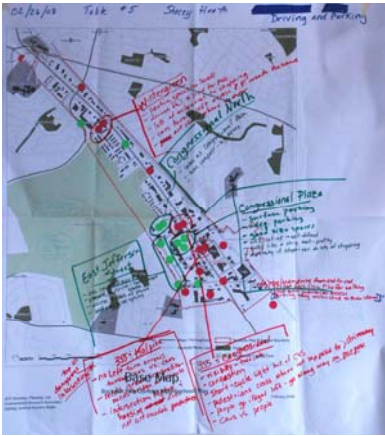
Community Appearance: The three tables that addressed Community Appearance were asked to consider places that are particularly attractive, that reflect well on Rockville, and that have physical conditions they would like to see more often throughout the community. They were also asked to identify those areas that are unattractive, undesirable to visit, or considered to be eyesores. Their results are as follows:

Good Places – Congressional Plaza, Congressional Village, the Woodmont Country Club, and Wintergreen Plaza were locations identified as reflecting positively on the community in terms of appearance. At the Congressionals participants like the mix of uses, the architecture, the pedestrian quality, mix of tenants, including interesting local restaurants, and landscaping and trees. The country club was noted as an important natural area that provides vistas and a nice contrast to the development on the Pike. Wintergreen was noted as having wide sidewalks, nice architecture and landscaping, compact development,

easy parking and a good layout. One participant indicated that the buildings in front reduce the visibility of parking from the road.

Bad Places – The east side of the Pike, along with Marlo and Ritchie Center, were most frequently cited as being bad representations of community appearance. Marlo/Ritchie Center was criticized as being visually unappealing and out of scale due to its large mass, lack of architectural quality, and materials. The east side of the Pike was described as “junky,” tired, and unattractive. Participants noted that the view from the Metro does not reflect well upon the community.

Driving and Parking: The four tables that examine Driving and Parking were asked to think about areas where driving and parking is easy and safe, and areas where driving and parking feels difficult or unsafe. Their results are as follows:



A sample table map from the Good Places, Bad Places exercise. This table looked at Driving and Parking.

Good Places – Congressional North, Congressional Plaza and East Jefferson Street were identified as good places. Participants cited adequate surface parking, good access (for both cars and pedestrians), and connectivity as qualities that make the shopping centers good for parking and driving. They like that East Jefferson is a less congested alternative to Rockville Pike, and they find that the trees, short blocks, and access to the back of stores make it a pleasant road to drive on. Wintergreen and Wootton Parkway were also noted as being positive areas for driving and parking. Participants like the multiple entrances and exits, the easy parking, the pedestrian accessibility, and the connections between Wootton and other roads, including 270.

Bad Places – Several key Pike intersections were identified as being bad places for drivers, including the intersection at Halpine, Congressional Lane, Wintergreen Plaza, and Twinbrook Parkway. Problems cited include lack of visibility, congestion, conflicts between cars and pedestrians, lack of left turn arrows, and insufficient light timing, among others. It is interesting to note that even those places that were labeled as being good for driving and parking – such as the Congressional centers and Wintergreen – are identified as having significant traffic problems where they intersect with the Pike.

Living on the Pike: Two tables were comprised of residents who lived either on the Pike or in the immediate vicinity of the study area. They were asked to consider where “life on the Pike” is particularly enjoyable due to the character of the place, community amenities, or access to goods and services. They also identified areas that reflect poorly on the community or generate negative impacts for residents. Their results are as follows:

Good Places – Once again, the Congressional shopping centers were mentioned as being good places for people who live on the Pike. Residents like having easy access to a variety of stores including CVS, Whole Foods, and restaurants. They find parking to be easy and they

like the architectural unity between Congressional Plaza and Congressional Village. One problem noted with Congressional North is that its size and layout limit pedestrian mobility and require visitors to drive between stores. In addition to these shopping areas, residents like the sense of community near Talbott Street. They also appreciate the Twinbrook Metro because it provides easy access to everything else, including the 46 bus route.

Bad Places – No specific area emerged as being particularly bad for residents living on the Pike. In general, participants mentioned problems with dangerous intersections (such as Chapman Avenue), and older shopping centers on the east side of the Pike that are unattractive and hard to access.

Walking: The table that addressed walking was asked to think about areas where walking feels safe and enjoyable, as well as areas where it feels less unsafe. They considered the character of sidewalks and pathways, the safety and comfort of crosswalks, and pedestrian access to goods and services. Their results are as follows:

Good Places – Areas cited as being good for walking were generally located off the Pike – they specifically noted the walking paths at Ritchie Center, Wintergreen, and the Woodmont Country Club (although this is private property). Participants like areas that are accessible to the Metro, including Congressional Village and Congressional Plaza.

Bad Places – Several areas were noted as being problematic for pedestrians. Congressional North provides no direct pedestrian access to retail. The east side of the Pike across from the Congressional centers was cited as being particularly dangerous to pedestrians, with few crosswalks, busy parking lots, and heavy traffic. Participants also pointed out that it is extremely difficult to cross the Pike on foot near Wintergreen Plaza, and that Federal Plaza is not accessible by foot.

Participant Recommendation Cards

At the conclusion of the Good Places, Bad Places exercise, participants were asked to complete a Recommendation Card to respond to the following question.

Think about what we have learned from the Good Places, Bad Places exercise. Think about what makes the good places good, and what makes the bad places bad. Given what we have learned, please answer the following question:

What are your two recommendations for making the physical environment along Rockville Pike the best that it can be in the coming years?

Participants shared their recommendations with their small group and identified the areas of consensus for their table. These recommendations ranged widely in their themes and provided numerous valuable suggestions for improving the Pike. A complete list of participant recommendations can be found in Appendix C. An analysis of the key themes that emerged from the recommendations can be found in Part 4: Key Themes and Emerging Principles.

Critical Questions

The Critical Questions exercise was designed to gather more input from the public in order to clarify the community’s vision regarding certain topics that emerged at the Kick-Off. Each table was assigned one of five categories – Public Transportation, Pedestrian Environment, Mixed-Use Development, Environmental Issues, and Open and Public Spaces. A brief summary of the input for each topic is shown below. A complete set of responses can be found in Appendix D. The results have also been integrated into the emerging principles discussed in Part 4 of this report.

- **Public Transportation** – Participants suggested a variety of ideas for enhancing public transportation along the Pike. In addition to improving existing bus service, they recommended introducing a shuttle or circulator route to move shoppers between stores. They also noted that infrastructure improvements are necessary to make public transportation easier and safer to use – including safer sidewalks and pedestrian paths, easily accessible parking, and well-lit bus stops and parking garages. They suggested completing the access roads and creating a separate lane for buses in order to make public transportation more reliable and efficient.
- **Pedestrian Environment** – The tables that discussed pedestrian environment focused heavily on improving pedestrian movement across the Pike. They suggested introducing more crossing points and better designating them with signs and alternative materials, increasing the signal timing for pedestrians, and building pedestrian overpasses in certain locations (such as Congressional Plaza and Wintergreen Plaza).
- **Open and Public Spaces** – Participants would like to see additional landscaping along the Pike. They suggested transforming the Pike into a boulevard that allows for more trees, plantings, benches, etc. They also recommended the addition of pocket parks and natural areas that serve as “places of refuge.” Participants would like to see more gathering and entertainment spaces along the Pike, including outdoor dining, a farmer’s market, a playhouse, and public spaces with fountains, benches, and public art.
- **Mixed-Use Development** – The tables that discussed mixed-use development would like to see it encouraged near the Metro stations. They recommended a range of 6 to 10 stories as being the

appropriate height for the Pike, and noted that mixed-use development should incorporate commercial space and different types of housing. Participants emphasized the importance of creating environments that are “green” – both in terms of landscaping and environmentally sensitive building practices.

- **Environment** – Participants would like to see a reduction in the amount of impervious surfaces on the Pike. They also emphasized the importance of introducing more green – in the form of trees, landscaping, and green roofs. They would like to reduce the number of cars on the Pike through improvements to the public transportation system and the pedestrian environment.

Part 4: Key Themes and Emerging Principles

The Good Places, Bad Places exercise focused on the physical characteristics that are important to the Rockville community. The Participant Recommendations suggest ways to celebrate the Pike’s strengths and transform its weaknesses. The Critical Questions exercise probed more deeply into key planning questions that must be addressed in a plan for the Pike. Taken collectively, the input from these activities effectively captures the community’s vision for the future of the Pike. The key themes that emerged from these exercises provide the basis for establishing development principles that will guide the plan for Rockville Pike. This section describes 10 key themes that emerged from the Stakeholder Workshop. A preliminary emerging principle is identified for each theme.

Architecture and design. Participants emphasized the importance of creating a visually appealing environment on the Pike through emphasis on high quality architecture and coherent design. Their recommendations addressed such issues as: structural renovations and façade improvements, bringing buildings closer to the street, enforcing building maintenance codes, creating more hidden parking, adopting a coherent design scheme, and incorporating wider sidewalks and quality landscaping.

***Emerging Principle:** Quality architecture and urban design will create a visually appealing environment along the Pike.*

Traffic flow. Many of the participant recommendations discussed the need to reduce traffic congestion and improve traffic safety. Suggestions for achieving this include basic street pavement repairs, improved traffic control technology and signal timing, and incorporating a more consistent and controlled system for entering and exiting shopping centers.

***Emerging Principle:** Roadway and intersection improvements on the Pike will allow for smooth, safe vehicular flow.*

Walkability / Bikeability. Many participants expressed strong concerns for pedestrian safety and the need to create a more walking and bike friendly

“Time traffic signals so that pedestrians have ample time to amble across the Pike”

environment on the Pike. A sampling of the wide variety of suggestions for improvement include: a green space corridor or median with a walking/biking trail; bike lanes, landscaping, or on-street parking to buffer sidewalks on both sides of the street; continuous sidewalks uninterrupted by service roads, traffic islands, and parking; pedestrian bridges crossing over the Pike; intersections that prioritize pedestrians with longer signals for crossing; maximizing pedestrian accessibility to shopping areas as well as surrounding neighborhoods; and reconfiguring shops to be connected and allow walking between as opposed to single store lots surrounded by parking.

Emerging Principle: The Pike will feature a safe and pleasant environment for walking and biking.

“Greening the Pike.” Many participants discussed the benefits of a greener Pike, from both an aesthetic and an environmental standpoint. Several participants mentioned the desire for more green and open space along Rockville Pike. Multiple recommendations were made to plant trees along either side, build a landscaped median with grass, trees and plantings, and create parks with connecting trails. In addition, participants also raised environmental concerns about the Pike related to air and noise pollution, “heat-island” effect, and stormwater runoff. To address these issues, participants recommended increased greenways, trees and pervious pavements, improved public transportation as a means of decreasing automobile use, and more energy efficient buildings.

Emerging Principle: Additional open space, landscaping, and environmentally friendly development will contribute to a “greener” Pike.

Mixed Use Development. Mixed-use development was recommended to expand the types of activities available along the Pike and create venues for nightlife and public gathering. Participants suggested developments near Metro stations with ground floor retail and housing above and cited nearby communities like White Flint, Silver Spring, and Bethesda as models.

Emerging Principle: The Pike will feature vibrant, walkable mixed-use developments.

Open and Public Space. Participants addressed the challenge of open and public space along the Pike, noting that the current environment is unsuited for enjoyable outdoor activity. Many made recommendations for out-door seating and cafés, but concerns were also expressed for the parking and street environment that currently makes outdoor dining and activity unpleasant. As solutions, participants suggested mixed-use developments that integrate green space and encourage walking, adding fountains, flowers and shrubs outside shopping centers, widened sidewalks and meandering landscaping between centers, out-door artwork in public places, small pocket parks with seating at regular intervals, and even a farmer’s market.

“Requiring trees on parking lot islands can go a long way toward giving a sense of greenway.”

“Outdoor cafes would be marvelous, provided their view could be something other than parking lots.”

***Emerging Principle:** New public spaces on the Pike will provide a pleasant environment for community gathering and outdoor activity.*

Retail and Redevelopment. Participants identified the commercial and retail success of Rockville Pike as an element that should continue to be supported. Recommendations include providing adequate parking, access and signage, supporting both large national retailers and smaller regional and local shops and restaurants, and assisting property owners in redeveloping some portions of the Pike.

"Make it conducive to great retail so we get good local, regional and national retail."

***Emerging Principle:** The economic success of Rockville's Pike will be maintained by supporting both local and national retail and encouraging property redevelopment.*

Connectivity. Many participants cited the need to better connect Rockville Pike with its adjacent shopping centers and surrounding neighborhoods and streets. Recommendations include access roads parallel to the Pike, multiple entrances and alternative access points to shopping centers, more back roads and back entrances, connecting shopping centers with sidewalks and coherent storefront design, and creating more of a street grid with north-south and east-west options to improve the transportation network.

***Emerging Principle:** Rockville's Pike will be well connected with surrounding areas, providing choices for cars and pedestrians to access and move between properties along the Pike.*

Public Transportation. Participants discussed the need for a better public transportation system in order to improve mobility on Rockville Pike and within the commercial centers. The most popular suggestion was to provide some form of either trolley or shuttle bus going up and down the Pike with parking at either end for passengers to drop off cars and board. Other recommendations include more frequent service of the current bus system, especially on weekends, designated bus lanes, integrating mass transit with the surrounding municipalities, and relocating bus stops to be safer and more accessible.

***Emerging Principle:** The Pike will feature efficient and reliable public transportation options.*

"Signage and architecture make a place welcoming and appealing. Some centers don't adequately publicize which tenants they have!"

Signage and Lighting. Several participants suggested ways of making Rockville Pike more welcoming and navigable including signage to better facilitate traffic flow, clearer publicizing of shops both large and small and on lower levels of shopping centers, visible street numbers for all addresses, and improved lighting on sidewalks and the Pike itself.

***Emerging Principle:** Appropriate signage, lighting, and wayfinding tools will make the Pike an inviting and easily navigable environment.*

These 10 emerging principles will be reviewed and tested with the public during the First Report to the Community on March 18, 2008.

Part 5: Exit Questionnaire

An exit questionnaire was distributed at the Stakeholder Workshop to collect information on how well participant turnout reflected overall community demographics (described below under Demographic Information), and to receive feedback on the meeting format (described under Meeting Evaluation.) A total of 77 participants completed the exit questionnaire.

Demographic Information

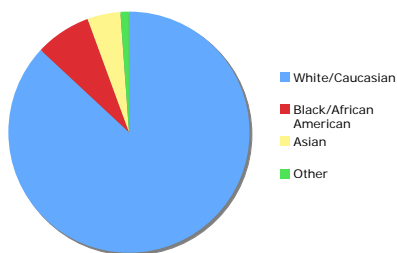
Among the questionnaire respondents, half (50.6%) were male, and over 91 percent were white. A large majority of respondents (76%) were between ages 45 and 74, with nearly 2/3 falling between 45 and 64. Over 92 percent of respondents had household incomes over \$50,000, and 55 percent had household incomes over \$100,000. Respondents were highly educated, as 100 percent had completed at least some college, and 63.6 percent had pursued some form of post-graduate study. Respondents tended to be long-term residents. Nearly 70 percent of respondents had lived in Rockville for 10 years or more, with over 47 percent claiming 20 or more years of residency.

The following tables and charts illustrate responses to the demographic portion of the Exit Questionnaire. These results can be compared with census data or other data sets to determine how participation at the forum compares with Rockville’s overall demographics.

1. What is your gender?

	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Male	39	50.6%
Female	38	49.4%
Total	77	100.0%

2. Please tell us which ethnic or racial group you most closely identify with.

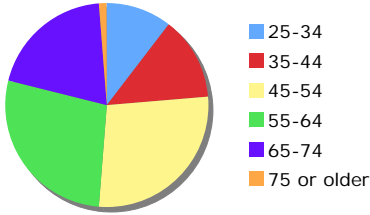


	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
White/Caucasian	66	91.7%
Black/African American	2	2.8%
Asian	3	4.2%
Other	1	1.4%
Total	72	100%

3. Are you Hispanic or Latino?

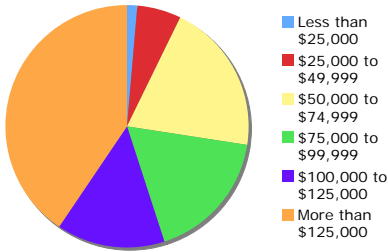
	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes	3	4.8%
No	66	95.2%
Total	62	100.0%

4. What is your age?



Under 19	0	0%
20-24 years	0	0%
25-34 years	8	10.5%
35-44 years	10	13.2%
45-54 years	21	27.6%
55-64 years	21	27.6%
65-74 years	15	19.7%
75 or older	1	1.3%
Total	76	100.0%

5. Please tell us about your annual household income.



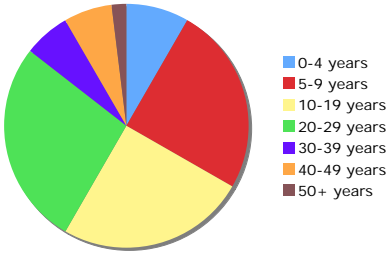
	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Less than \$25,000	1	1.4%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	4	5.8%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14	20.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12	17.4%
\$100,000 to \$125,000	10	14.5%
More than \$125,000	28	40.6%
Total	69	100.0%

6. Please tell us about your education attainment level.

	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Less than a high school diploma	0	0%
High school diploma	0	0%
Some college	13	16.9%
College graduate	14	18.2%
Post-graduate study	50	64.9%
Total	77	100.0%

7. Do you live in Rockville?

	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Yes	56	72.7%
No	21	27.3%
Total	77	100.0%



7b. If yes, how long have you lived in Rockville?

	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
0-4 years	4	7.5%
5-9 years	12	22.6%
10-19 years	12	22.6%
20-29 years	13	24.5%
30-39 years	8	15.1%
40-49 years	3	5.7%
50+ years	1	1.9%
Total	53	100.0%

8. What neighborhood do you live in?

There was a great diversity of neighborhoods mentioned in response to this question. Common neighborhoods included Twinbrook, Hungerford, Woodley Gardens, and Montrose. Several participants came from Congressional and Woodmont Overlook, and live within the study area.

Meeting Evaluation

Meeting evaluation questions are designed to provide information to consultants and staff to help refine future meeting activities. Responses indicated that participants were generally very pleased with the format of the meeting. Satisfaction with the Table Dialogues small group activity was particularly high, with 98.6 percent of respondents noting that they were comfortable working with their small group. The vast majority of respondents felt that their ideas were received and recorded appropriately (98.5%), and that the small group process was fair to everyone (96.9%). Regarding meeting length, while a few participants thought the meeting was too long, 88.9% of respondents noted that the two-hour timeframe was “about right.”