

# City of College Park Environmental Scan

February 2015



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## Introduction

In late 2014, the City of College Park began a process to develop a new five-year strategic plan. A strategic planning process involves articulating a clear vision and mission, identifying critical success factors and prioritized goals to achieve the vision, and creating implementation plans. The process of developing a strategic plan explores these questions:

- What do we know to be true? – Where are we?
- What do we hope will be true in the future? – Where do we want to go?
- What must go well in order to make it so? – How do we get there?

In this way, a strategic plan is a road map to move a community toward its intended vision. Ultimately, a strategic plan is a fundamental management tool that helps the organization better serve the public.

The purpose of a strategic plan is to articulate a desired future; it includes consideration of both present conditions and future trends that might affect the community. In strategic planning, the process of determining what we "know to be true today" is called an environmental scan. An environmental scan considers the factors that will influence future direction. Elements considered in an environmental scan include any events, trends, and relationships that might be relevant in this planning. An environmental scan creates a shared learning experience for each participant in the planning process to identify challenges and opportunities and also creates a starting point from which to improve the future position. It provides useful information and sets the stage for the strategic plan.

Several other documents establish the foundation for informing a new strategic plan. These documents include the City's current strategic plan, the College Park City-University Partnership (CPCUP) University District Vision 2020, the 2010 Central U.S. Route 1 Corridor Sector Plan, the 2014 College Park-Riverdale Park Transit District Development Plan, the Maryland Sustainable Communities Action Plan, and the Neighborhood Stabilization and Quality of Life Report.

Both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered to prepare this environmental scan, including data on trends in local, regional and national demographics and responses from previous planning documents and resident surveys. Information presented in this environmental scan was primarily derived from the 2000 and 2010 censuses, 2013 American Community Survey Estimates, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, resident survey data provided by the City of College Park, stakeholder focus group feedback, survey results from department heads and other key staff, and a community survey conducted by The Novak Consulting Group.

## Demographic Trends

### Population

#### Total Population

College Park’s total population has increased 25% since the 2000 census, with an estimated 30,784 residents as of 2013.

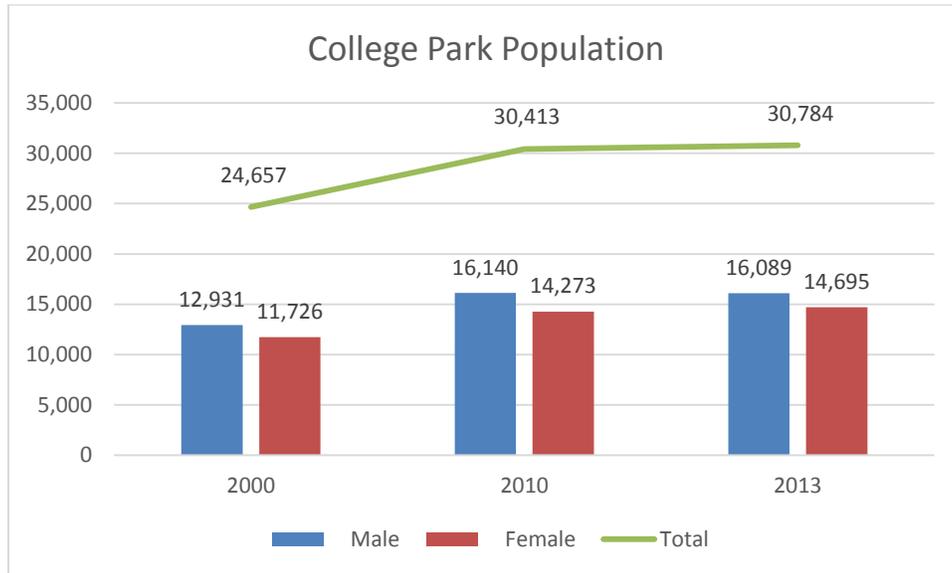


Figure 1: College Park Population<sup>1</sup>

The relative distribution of males and females in College Park has remained constant over this growth period, with males outnumbering females 52% to 48% in both 2000 and 2013.

Although Maryland and Prince George’s County have grown, the rate of population growth in College Park has exceeded growth of both the County and the State of Maryland. The table below shows total population counts for these jurisdictions.

Table 1: Total Population 2000-2013<sup>2</sup>

Area	2000	2010	2013	% change 2000 - 2013
College Park	24,657	30,413	30,784	25%
Prince George’s County	801,515	863,420	873,481	9%
State of Maryland	5,296,486	5,773,552	5,834,299	10%

While the share of Maryland and Prince George’s County residents who live in College Park has increased, College Park still represents only a small percentage of the County’s and State’s overall population.

<sup>1</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

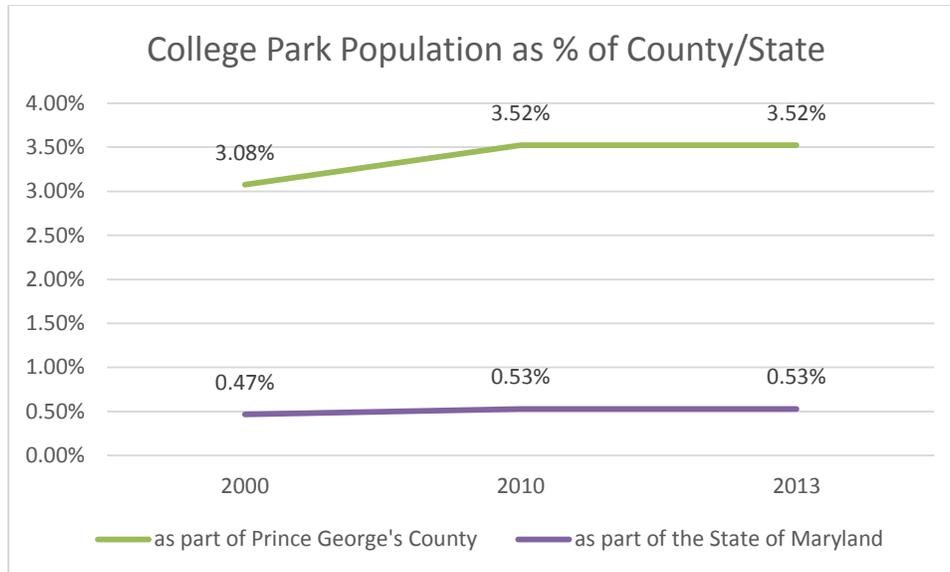


Figure 2: College Park Population Comprising County and State Population, 2000-2013<sup>3</sup>

### Age Distribution

Overall age distribution in College Park skews toward persons between 15 and 25 years of age, according to Census and American Community Survey statistics, with nearly 70% of College Park's 2013 population concentrated between persons aged 15 and 34 years old.

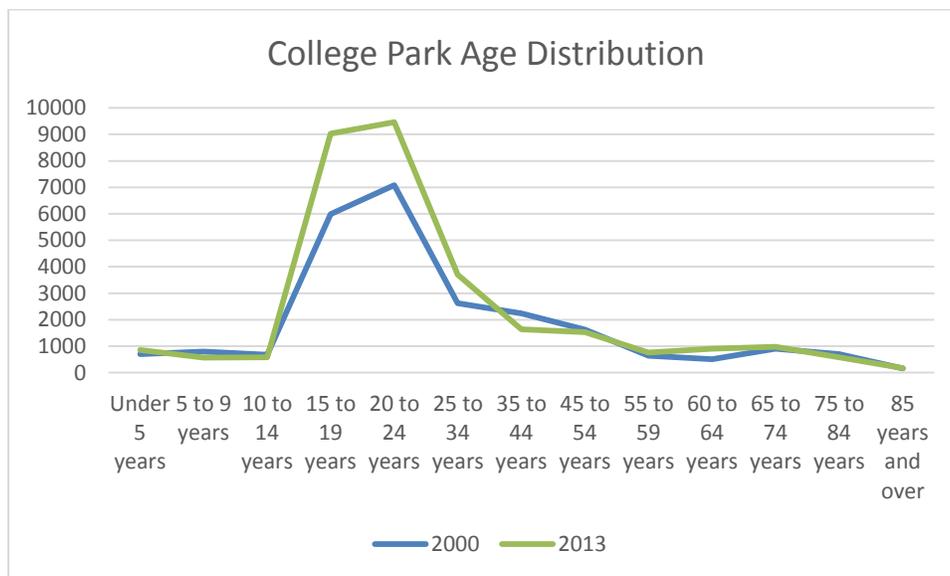


Figure 3: College Park Age Distribution, 2000 and 2013<sup>4</sup>

College Park is relatively young compared with the age distribution in Prince George's County and the State of Maryland.

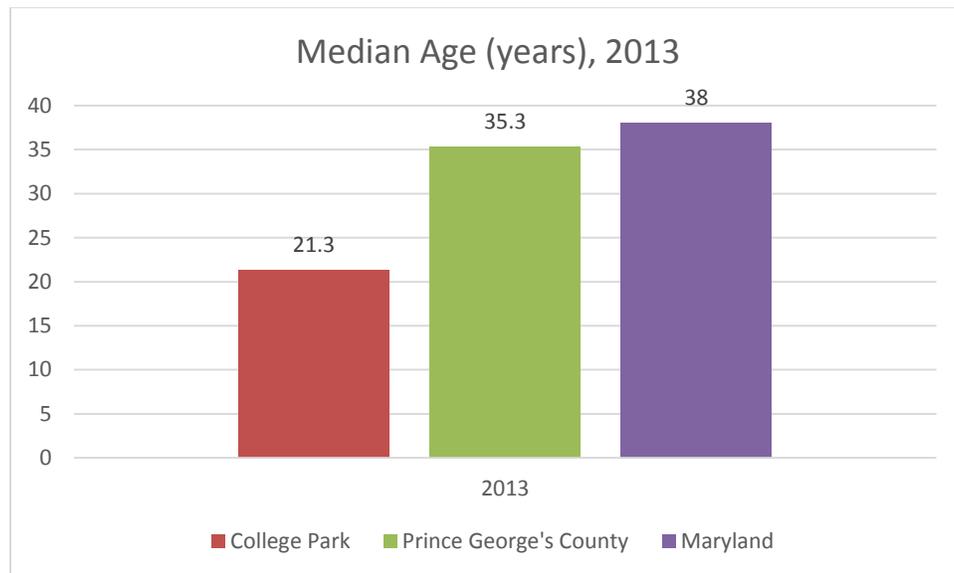
<sup>3</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>4</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

**Table 2: Age Distribution Comparison, 2013<sup>5</sup>**

Age Groups as % Total Population, 2013	College Park	Prince George's County	Maryland
Under 5 years	2.8%	6.8%	6.3%
5 to 9 years	1.8%	6.1%	6.3%
10 to 14 years	1.9%	6.5%	6.5%
15 to 19 years	29.3%	7.4%	6.9%
20 to 24 years	30.7%	8.0%	6.8%
25 to 34 years	12.0%	14.8%	13.4%
35 to 44 years	5.3%	14.1%	13.5%
45 to 54 years	5.0%	14.8%	15.4%
55 to 59 years	2.5%	6.3%	6.6%
60 to 64 years	3.0%	5.3%	5.7%
65 to 74 years	3.2%	6.1%	7.0%
75 to 84 years	1.9%	2.8%	3.9%
85 years and over	0.6%	1.0%	1.7%

The median age in College Park is markedly younger than the surrounding area and has remained relatively constant since 2000.

**Figure 4: Median Age Comparison, 2013<sup>6</sup>**

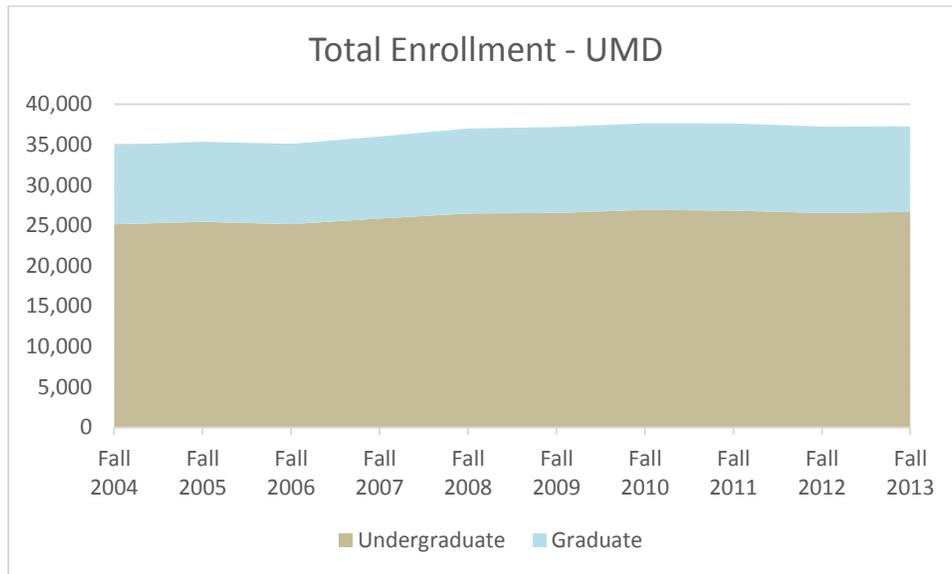
<sup>5</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>6</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

In 2013, the median age of persons in College Park was a full 14 years younger than persons in Prince George’s County and nearly 17 years younger than persons in the State of Maryland.

### University Growth

The student population attending the University of Maryland at College Park (UMD) has increased by 2,339 students (full and part-time) from 2004-2013. This represents a 6.7% increase over 2004 enrollment.



**Figure 5: Total Enrollment at University of Maryland, 2004 - 2013<sup>7</sup>**

In terms of raw population growth, College Park has added an estimated 6,127 citizens since the 2000 census, while UMD has increased enrollment by 2,339 individuals since 2004 (enrollment data prior to 2004 was unavailable).

<sup>7</sup> Source: University of Maryland Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment.

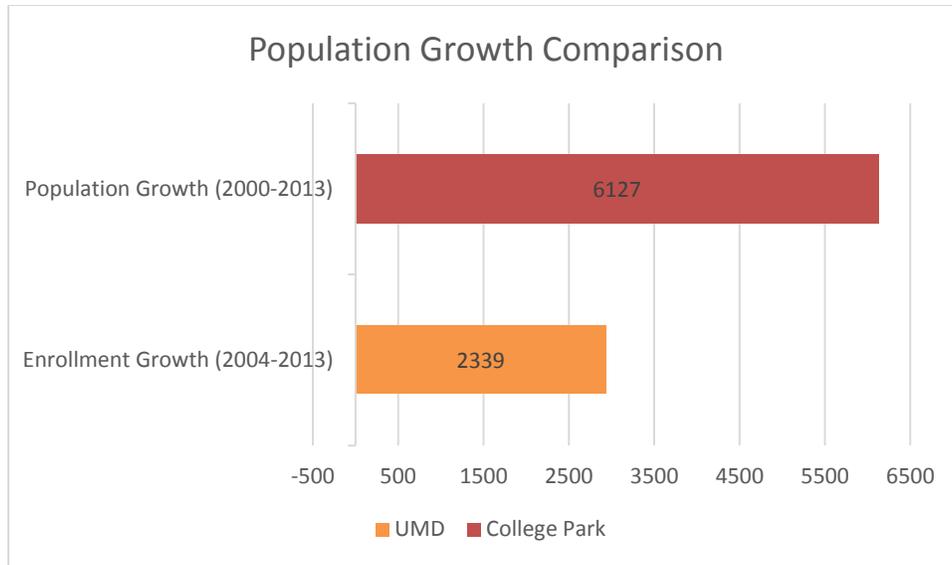


Figure 6: Population Growth Comparison – College Park and University of Maryland, 2000-2013<sup>8</sup>

**Racial & Ethnic Diversity**

College Park is also becoming increasingly diverse in race and ethnicity. Overall, the population of whites has been declining in College Park since 2000, while the population of other races has steadily increased. Major census categories for race include White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race. In the chart below, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race data has been combined due to small percentages in population and growth for those categories.

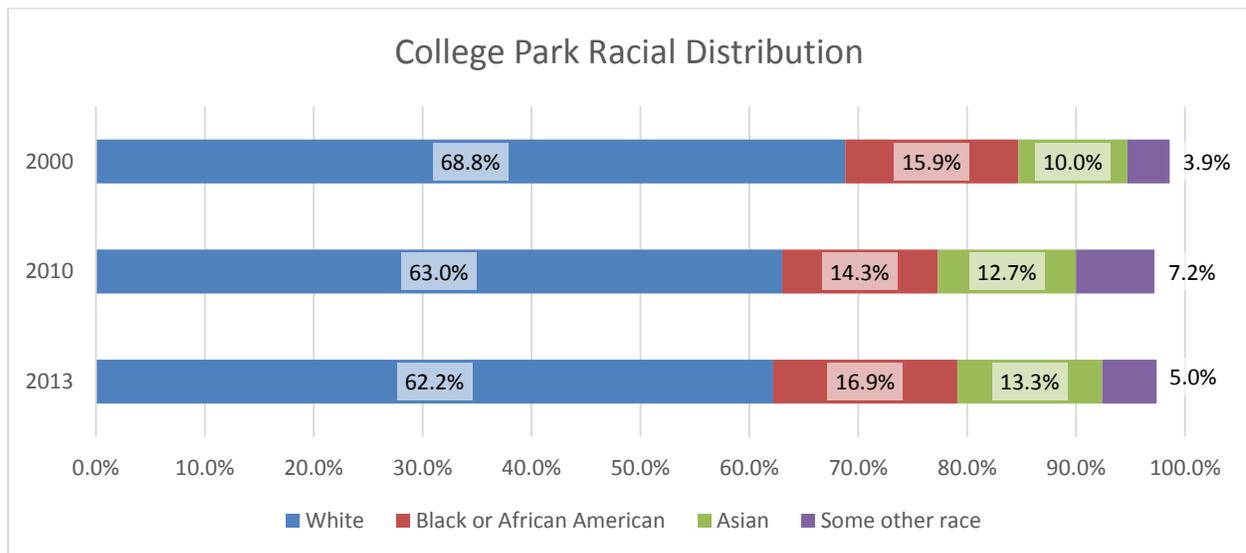


Figure 7: College Park Racial Distribution, 2000-2013<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013 American Community Survey, University of Maryland Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment.

<sup>9</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

Additionally, the percentage of individuals self-identifying as ethnically Hispanic has also increased, from 5.5% in 2000 to just over 10% in 2013. According to the Census Bureau, race and ethnicity are separate classifications, and members of any race may also classify themselves as ethnically Hispanic depending on their personal origins. The figure below shows respondents of any race in College Park who classify themselves as Hispanic.

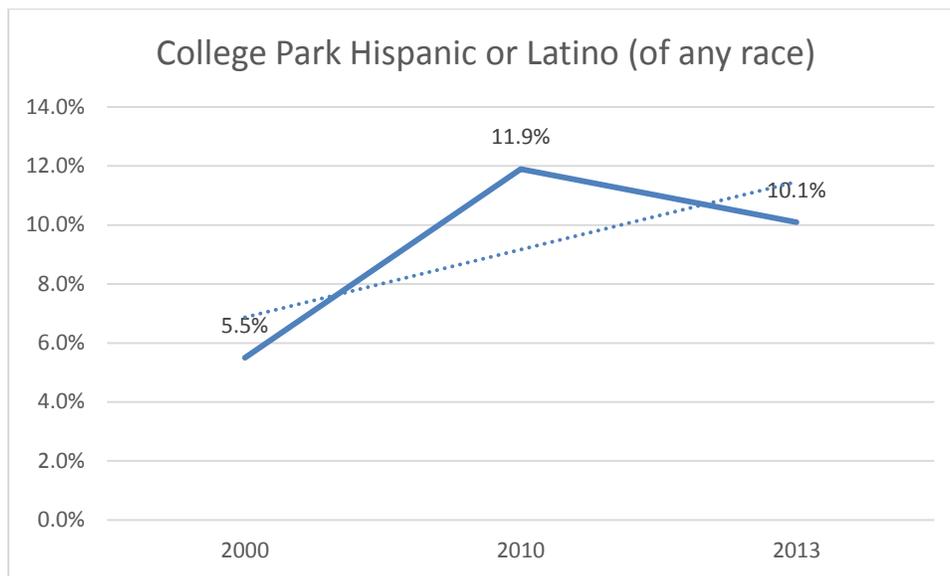


Figure 8: College Park Hispanic Population, 2000-2013<sup>10</sup>

Compared with the rest of Prince George’s County and the State of Maryland, College Park is proportionally home to more Whites, Asians, and Native Hawaiians, and fewer Blacks or African-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics and other races.

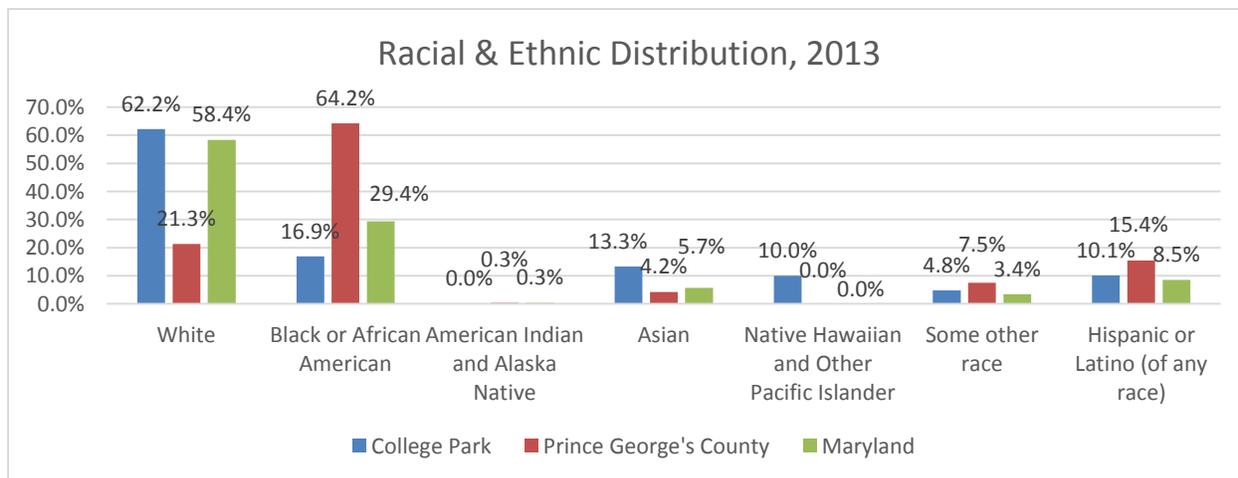


Figure 9: Racial & Ethnic Distribution Comparison, 2013<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>11</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

## Education

Educational attainment is also on the rise in College Park. While the proportion of residents with at least a high school education is mostly unchanged, the proportion of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher has increased 10% since 2000. Educational attainment percentages for the population aged 25 years and above is in the figure below.

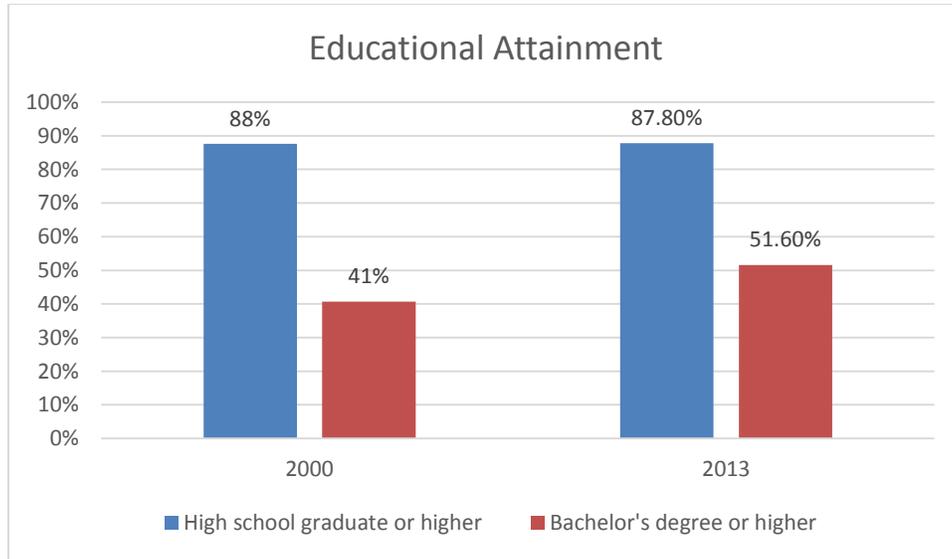


Figure 10: College Park Educational Attainment – Persons Aged 25 and Over, 2000 and 2013<sup>12</sup>

College Park also ranks highly in terms of regional educational attainment. While high school attainment figures are comparable between College Park, Prince George’s County, and the State of Maryland, College Park noticeably leads the County and State in persons with higher education on a proportional basis.

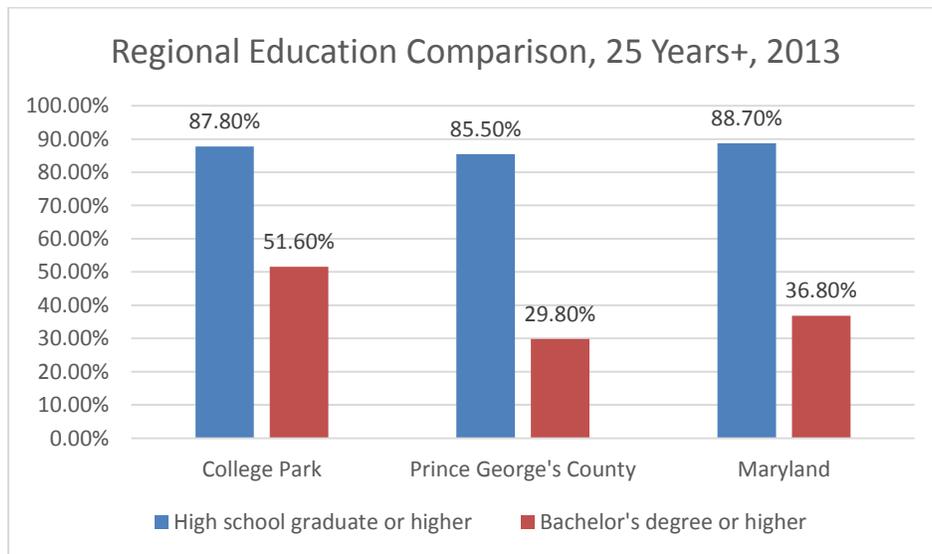


Figure 11: Regional Educational Attainment – Persons Aged 25 and Over, 2013<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

Among the population aged 18-24 years in College Park, census data shows most persons have attained some college or an associate's degree. The levels of attainment in persons of this age group are largely unchanged since 2000.

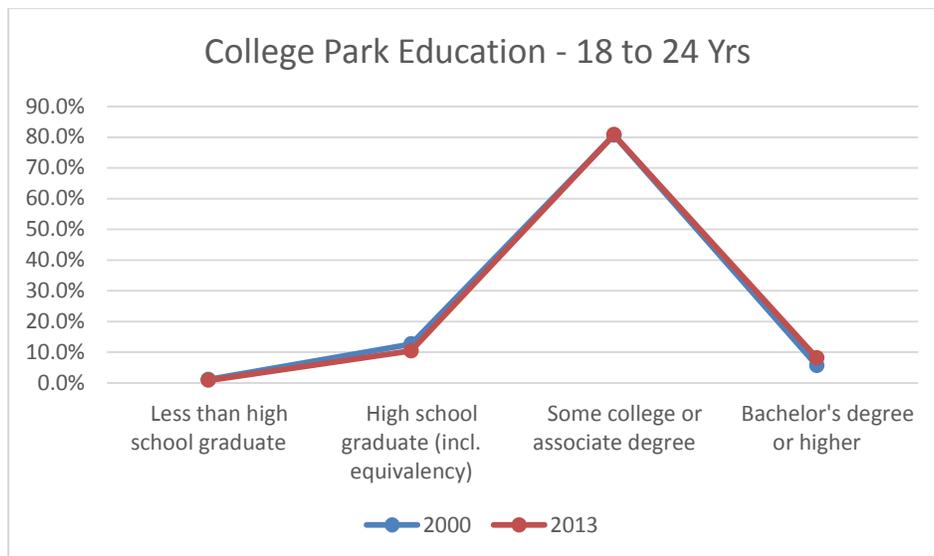


Figure 12: College Park Educational Attainment – Persons 18 to 24 Years, 2000 and 2013<sup>14</sup>

Compared with the region, College Park has a much smaller proportion of 18-24 year olds with a high school diploma (or equivalent) or less education. College Park has proportionally more 18-24 year olds with some level of college education, and relatively fewer 18-24 year olds with a bachelor's degree or higher.

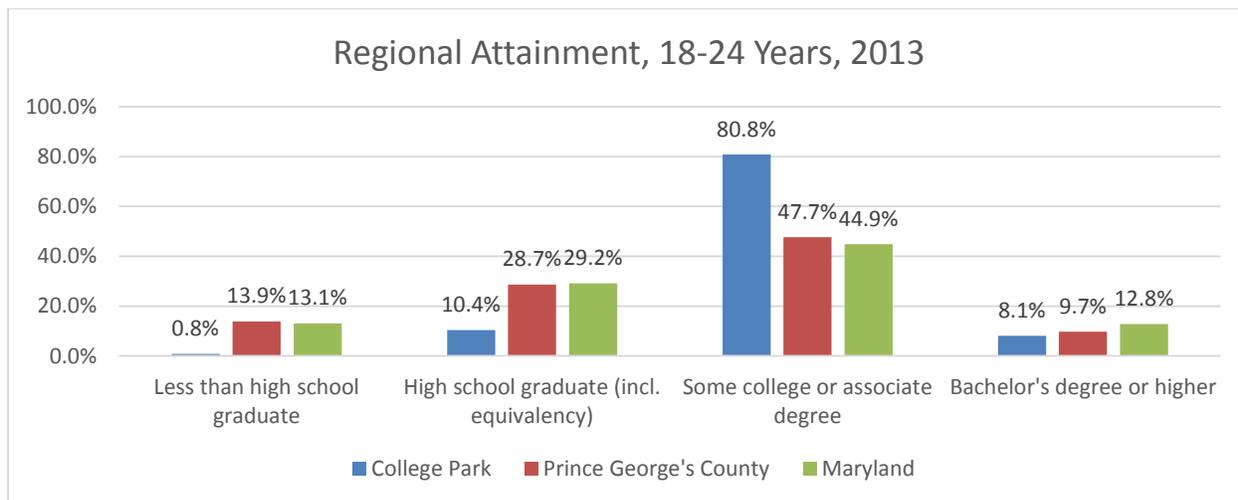


Figure 13: Regional Educational Attainment – Persons 18 to 24 Years, 2013<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>14</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>15</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

### Housing Occupancy

According to census data, the number of housing units in the City increased 31.4% from 2000 to 2010. Vacant housing increased 577% in the same time frame, from 215 vacant units in 2000 to 1,455 vacant units in 2010.

Occupancy rates in 2013 are roughly on par with Prince George’s County and the State of Maryland; approximately 92.3% of College Park’s housing units are occupied, compared with 92.2% for the County and 89.9% for the State.

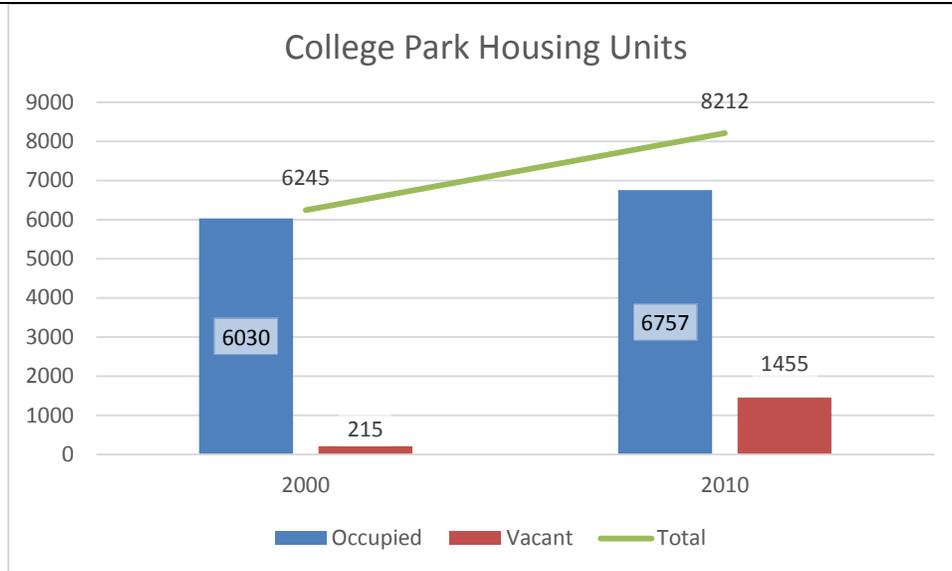


Figure 14: College Park Housing Units<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census.

## New Housing Developments

College Park has experienced redevelopment in recent years, particularly along the Route 1 corridor, featuring new mixed-use structures with multi-family housing and retail components. Growth in new housing projects is proportionally larger than similar projects in Prince George’s County and the State of Maryland, as the percentage of newer housing structures (built in 2000 or later) in College Park is higher than both Prince George’s County and the State.

**Table 3: Age of Housing Structures, 2013<sup>17</sup>**

Year Structure Was Built	College Park	Prince George’s County	Maryland
Built 2010 or later	2.0%	0.4%	0.6%
Built 2000 to 2009	15.1%	11.0%	12.2%
Built 1990 to 1999	7.0%	13.2%	14.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	5.1%	13.5%	15.7%
Built 1970 to 1979	8.3%	16.1%	14.7%
Built 1960 to 1969	15.4%	21.2%	12.2%
Built 1950 to 1959	23.7%	13.8%	12.2%
Built 1940 to 1949	11.8%	6.0%	6.1%
Built 1939 or earlier	11.5%	4.7%	12.3%

This data also reveals that there is a larger proportional stock of older housing (1939 or earlier) in College Park as compared with the rest of Prince George’s County. While College Park was experiencing faster housing growth than the County and State from 1939-1959, this trend began to change in the 1960s. By 1970, Prince George’s County and the State of Maryland both experienced proportionally more housing starts than College Park, until the 2000s when College Park’s growth factor was higher.

A significant amount of new housing projects in the City include off-campus student housing; housing projects completed between 2005 and 2015 represent over \$580 million of new investment.

Information in Tables 4 and 5 below was obtained from the City of College Park’s Community Development Department. “Non-Student Housing” includes housing developments not specifically marketed to university students. “Off-Campus Student Housing” includes housing developments specifically marketed to university students, particularly those attending the University of Maryland.

<sup>17</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

**Table 4: Major Off-Campus Housing Developments in College Park, 2005-2015<sup>18</sup>**

Development Name	Year Completed	# of Units	Investment Amount
Non-Student Housing			
Camden College Park	2007	508	\$ 84,900,000
The Domain	2013	236	\$ 82,000,000
Subtotal		744	\$ 166,900,000
Off-Campus Student Housing			
University View I	2005	352	\$ 87,800,000
University View II	2010	154	\$ 58,800,000
Mazza Grandmarc	2010	231	\$ 53,000,000
The Varsity	2011	258	\$ 97,600,000
The Enclave	2011	94	\$ 32,500,000
Landmark College Park	2015	306	\$ 90,000,000
Subtotal		1,395	\$ 419,700,000
GRAND TOTAL		2,139	\$ 586,600,000

Information provided by the City of College Park indicates continued increases in multifamily investment, as the number of housing projects beginning in 2015 or later represents over \$300 million of additional investment. The table below shows upcoming investments in the next two years.

**Table 5: Proposed Major Housing Developments in College Park, 2015-2017<sup>19</sup>**

Development Name	Target Completion Date	# of Units	Investment Amount
Non-Student Housing			
Monument Village	2016	235	\$ 55,000,000
The Boulevard at 9091	2017	283	\$ 63,000,000
College Park Place	2017		\$ 40,000,000
Subtotal		518	\$ 158,000,000
Off-Campus Student Housing			
Knox Village	2016	445	\$ 150,000,000
Subtotal		445	\$ 150,000,000
GRAND TOTAL		963	\$ 308,000,000

These developments all have City-approved plans, but have not yet begun construction.

<sup>18</sup> Source: City of College Park Community Development Department.

<sup>19</sup> Source: City of College Park Community Development Department.

## Home Ownership

Home ownership has declined since the 2000 census, with more renter-occupied units in College Park than owner-occupied units. In 2000, 57% of houses were owner-occupied, 46% in 2010, and 48% in 2013.

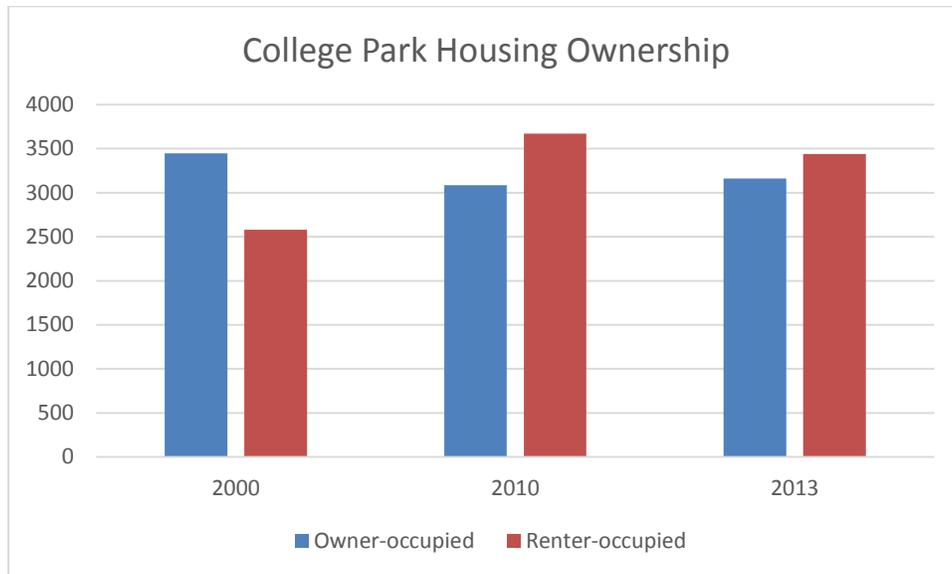


Figure 15: Owners vs. Renters in College Park, 2000 - 2013<sup>20</sup>

Table 6 shows the monthly rent amounts for the City of College Park, Prince George’s County, and Maryland.

Table 6: Gross Rent – Monthly Amount, 2013<sup>21</sup>

Gross Rent (per month)	College Park	Prince George’s County	Maryland
Less than \$200	1.9%	0.8%	1.9%
\$200 to \$299	2.8%	1.2%	2.7%
\$300 to \$499	1.4%	1.6%	3.9%
\$500 to \$749	6.3%	2.9%	7.8%
\$750 to \$999	11.7%	14.2%	17.3%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	26.6%	51.7%	37.7%
\$1,500 or more	49.2%	27.6%	28.8%

Notably, nearly half of rents paid in College Park are in the \$1,500 or more range, according to the latest American Community Survey statistics (2013). This is a departure from rental rates in Prince George’s County and the State, which have proportionally more rental units available in the \$1,000 - \$1,499 range.

<sup>20</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>21</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

Poverty and unemployment levels show a similar pattern. According to the Census Bureau, the percentage of individuals and families who were at or under the poverty line during the last 12 months increased from 2000 to 2013. In 2000, the unemployment rate was 3.7%; in 2013, the unemployment rate was 7.3%.

### Commuting and Travel

Most residents in College Park drive a car alone to commute to work, but walking comes in second as a primary form of commuting. Residents reporting that they drive alone has remained at the same level from 2000-2013, whereas residents using public transportation and working from home have increased over the same time period. The number of respondents reporting they commute in a carpool also increased slightly.

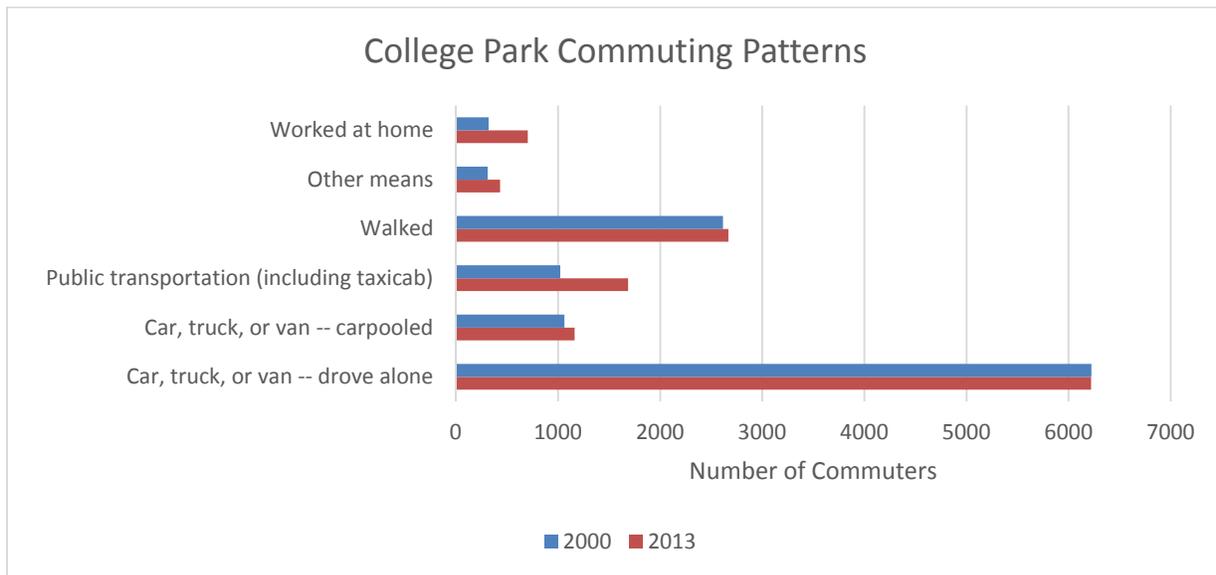
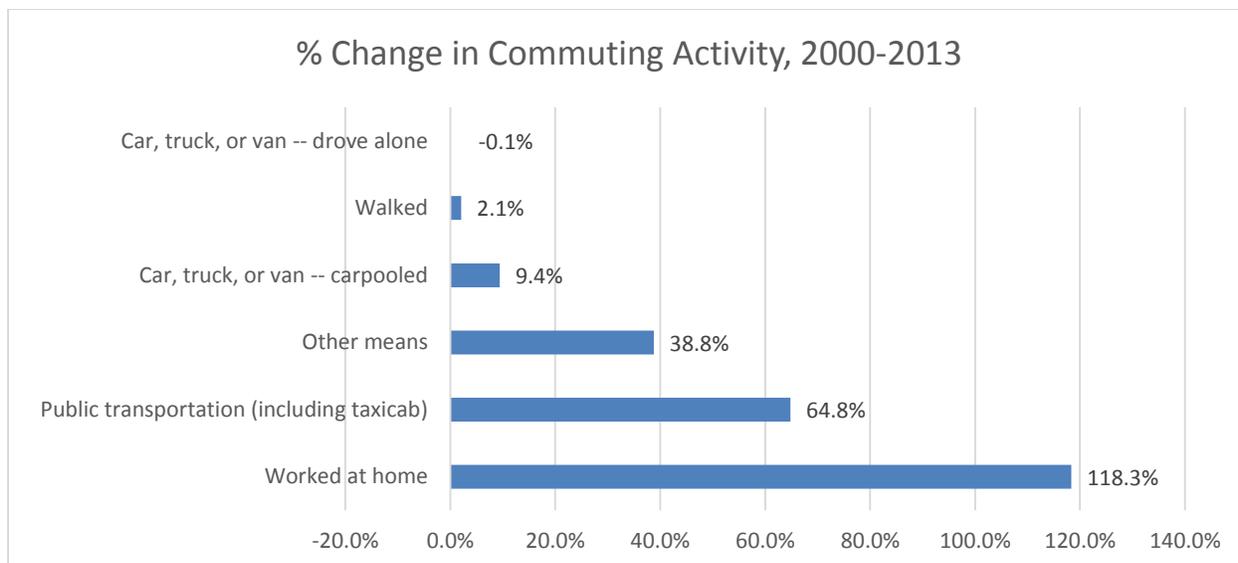


Figure 16: Commuting Patterns in College Park, 2000 and 2013<sup>22</sup>

Another way of evaluating this data is to examine the percentage change in the number of persons reporting in each category. Areas that have changed the least include the numbers of respondents reporting that they drive alone, walk, or carpool. On the other hand, the numbers of respondents reporting they walk, use public transportation, or get to work by some other means have increased more significantly.

<sup>22</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

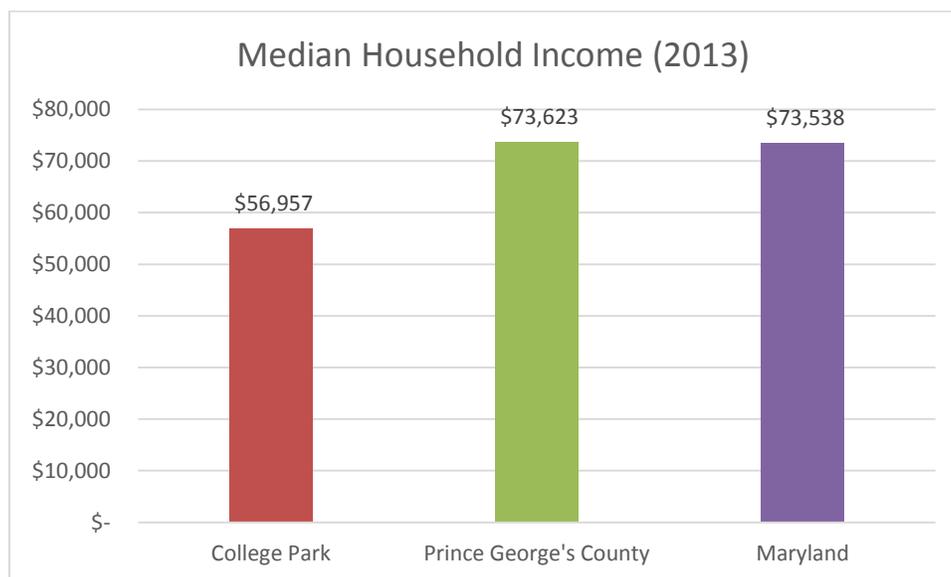


**Figure 17: Commuting Patterns in College Park, % Change, 2000 and 2013<sup>23</sup>**

The mean travel time to work has increased by just under two minutes from 2000 to 2013, from approximately 25 minutes in 2000 to nearly 27 minutes in 2013.

### Income, Poverty, and Unemployment

Relative to Prince George’s County and the State of Maryland, households in College Park earn almost 29% less in terms of mean annual income.



**Figure 18: College Park Median Household Income, 2013<sup>24</sup>**

<sup>23</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>24</sup> Source: 2013 American Community Survey.

Table 7 shows the income distribution of College Park, Prince George's County, and Maryland residents. More than 17% of College Park households earn less than \$10,000 per year.

Household and Annual Income (2013 dollars)	College Park	Prince George's County	Maryland
Less than \$10,000	17.4%	4.0%	5.2%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5.9%	2.6%	3.3%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	8.5%	5.7%	7.0%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	5.4%	6.9%	7.2%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	7.7%	12.2%	10.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	15.7%	19.5%	17.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13.9%	15.1%	13.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	13.9%	19.2%	18.2%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	6.1%	8.7%	8.8%
\$200,000 or more	5.6%	6.1%	8.7%

The City of College Park has a higher proportion of households earning less than \$25,000 when compared with the County and the State. At the other end of the income spectrum, College Park has proportionally fewer high earners (with an annual income of \$50,000+) than Prince George's County or the State of Maryland. In College Park, slightly more than 55% of all households earn \$50,000 or more annually. Earners at the same level in Prince George's County and the State of Maryland account for 68.6% and 66.5% of households respectively.

Poverty and unemployment levels show a similar pattern. According to the Census Bureau, the percentage of individuals and families who were at or under the poverty line during the last 12 months increased from 2000 to 2013. In 2000, the unemployment rate was 3.7%; in 2013, the unemployment rate was 7.3%.

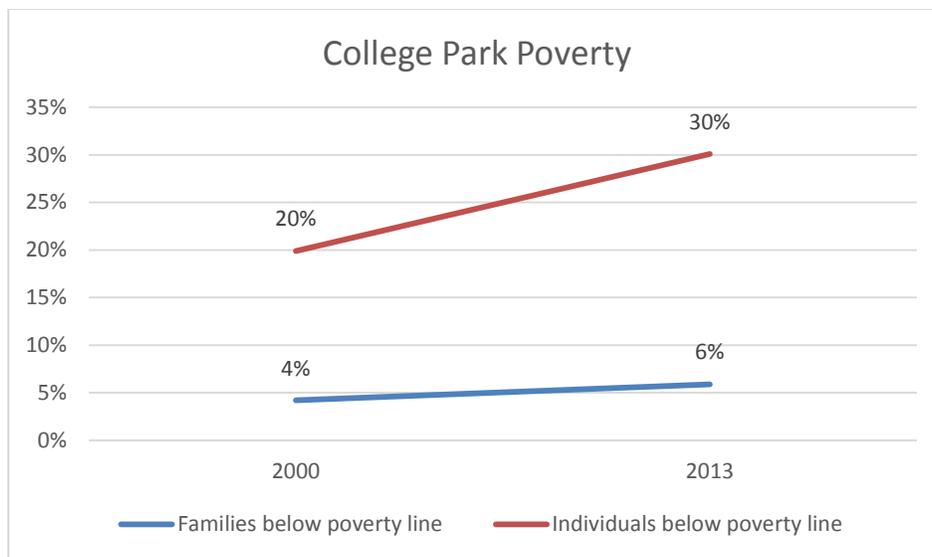


Figure 19: Poverty Indicators in College Park, 2000 and 2013<sup>25</sup>

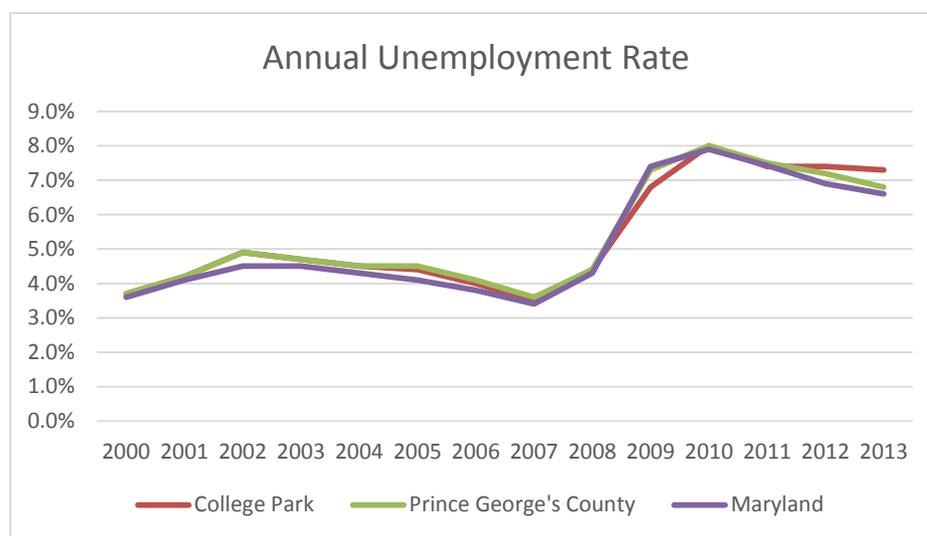


Figure 20: Annual Unemployment Rate<sup>26</sup>

This pattern mirrors unemployment in Prince George's County and the State of Maryland; although at the end of 2013, unemployment in College Park was slightly higher than both the County and State. The City ended 2013 with a 7.3% unemployment rate, while the County and State were at 6.8% and 6.6% respectively.

<sup>25</sup> Source: 2000 Census, 2013 American Community Survey.

<sup>26</sup> Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Crime

Public Safety and police services are provided to College Park residents primarily through a police services contract with the Prince George's County Police Department (PGCPD). This contract provides for three full-time County police officers on permanent assignment in College Park. The City also employs several off-duty PGCPD officers on a contract basis to provide supplemental patrol services. The University of Maryland Police Department provides public safety and enforcement services on-campus and shares jurisdiction in some downtown areas near the University with PGCPD.

Crime statistics for this section were provided by PGCPD for the City of College Park and are exclusive of UMD statistics. Likewise, the University of Maryland Police Department provided statistics that are exclusive of enforcement activities occurring outside the University; in short, the respective datasets do not overlap. This allows for a clear distinction between crime occurring on the University campus and crime occurring within the rest of the City of greater College Park.

In accordance with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) standards, both departments provided information on crimes in the following areas:

- Criminal Homicide
- Forcible Rape
- Robbery
- Aggravated Assault
- Burglary
- Larceny-Theft
- Motor Vehicle Theft

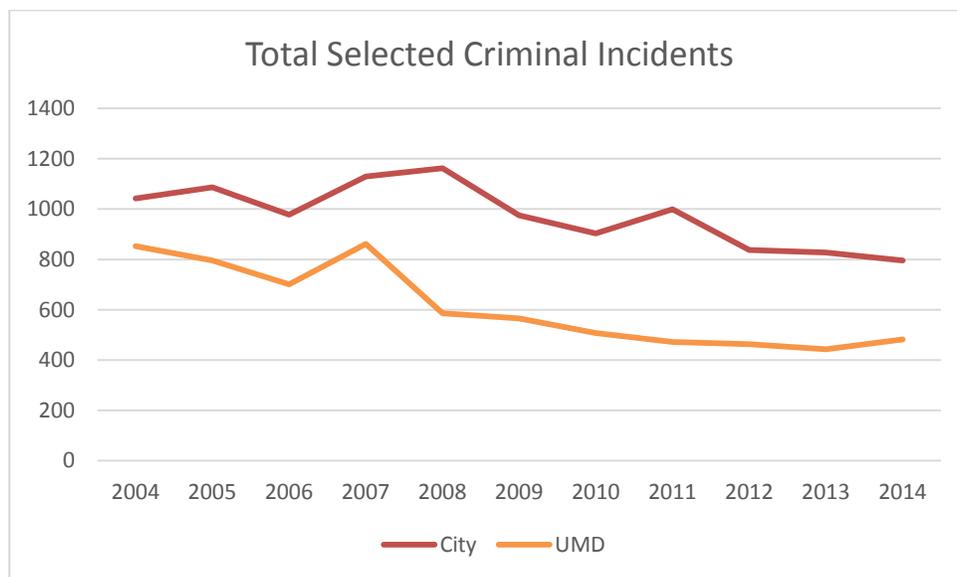
Additionally, the University provided statistics on arson incidents. These statistics were not available from PGCPD and represent a small fraction of all crime occurring at the University; hence, they were omitted from this section.

The following table shows the number of incidents reported by each agency over the last 10 years.

**Table 8: Comparative Crime Statistics, 2004-2014<sup>27</sup>**

Incident Type	Location	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Criminal Homicide	City	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1
	UMD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forcible Rape	City	6	7	7	10	5	2	2	2	4	6	4
	UMD	6	3	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Robbery	City	44	64	52	51	42	43	45	47	35	14	19
	UMD	12	9	18	15	9	11	7	8	3	5	3
Aggravated Assault	City	69	67	62	60	85	57	71	70	76	65	65
	UMD	18	13	18	16	9	9	9	6	9	2	6
Burglary, B&E	City	120	134	154	151	187	170	202	196	78	111	131
	UMD	154	119	107	191	89	141	88	79	59	46	51
Larceny-Theft	City	603	608	527	666	691	615	511	586	560	556	484
	UMD	589	576	513	582	439	361	365	359	351	362	405
Motor Vehicle Theft	City	196	205	175	192	152	88	72	97	84	73	91
	UMD	74	75	43	57	40	43	38	19	41	28	17
Totals	City	1042	1086	978	1130	1162	975	903	999	837	827	795
	UMD	853	795	701	861	586	566	507	472	463	443	482

In general, the number of total UCR incidents has fallen in the City of College Park and on the University of Maryland campus since 2004.



**Figure 21: Total of Comparative Crime Statistics, 2004-2014<sup>28</sup>**

<sup>27</sup> Source: University of Maryland Department of Public Safety, Prince George’s County Police Department.

<sup>28</sup> Source: University of Maryland Department of Public Safety, Prince George’s County Police Department.

A closer look at the data reveals some of the smaller trends driving this overall picture. For example, a major factor in the reduction of incidents at UMD has to do with reduced high-volume incidents. In other words, there were fewer crimes committed in 2014 that were commonly committed in 2004. Chief among these is motor vehicle thefts, which have dropped 77% since 2004. The University has also seen a sizable reduction in burglaries (-67%) and a large drop in larcenies/thefts (-31%). This has resulted in hundreds of fewer incidents per year on the UMD campus.

With respect to crimes committed in the City of College Park proper (outside of campus), a somewhat similar pattern emerges.

**Table 9: College Park Change in Incident Frequency, 2004-2014<sup>29</sup>**

Incident Type	2004	2014	% Change
Criminal Homicide	4	1	-75%
Forcible Rape	6	4	-33%
Robbery	44	19	-57%
Aggravated Assault	69	65	-6%
Burglary, B&E	120	131	9%
Larceny-Theft	603	484	-20%
Motor Vehicle Theft	196	91	-54%
Total Incidents	1042	795	-24%

The City has seen several large reductions in Larceny-Thefts and in Motor Vehicle Theft incidents, which contribute the most toward reducing incident counts in the City. In terms of change within incident categories, the number of criminal homicides has experienced a 75% decline, from four incidents in 2004 to only one incident in 2014. A sharp decline in robberies is also noticeable, with a 57% decrease over 2004 levels. As previously mentioned, motor vehicle thefts have also declined by over half.

One exception in the above table is notable, in that the number of Burglaries/Breaking & Entering incidents has risen over the past decade. The total increase is relatively small—9%, or 11 incidents—but it is important to note that this category is an exception to the overall trend of declining crime in College Park.

Importantly, many of the City's strategic documents, including the Neighborhood Stabilization and Quality of Life Group and the CPCUP Implementation Plan, stress the need for the City to help create safe environments. These crime figures indicate progress in terms of reducing crime both on the UMD campus and in College Park as a whole.

Two other notable points may be made about crime in the City of College Park. The first is that total incidents of violent crime are down 28% since 2004, and the total number of violent crime incidents has been below 100 distinct incidents for the last two years.

<sup>29</sup> Source: Prince George's County Police Department.

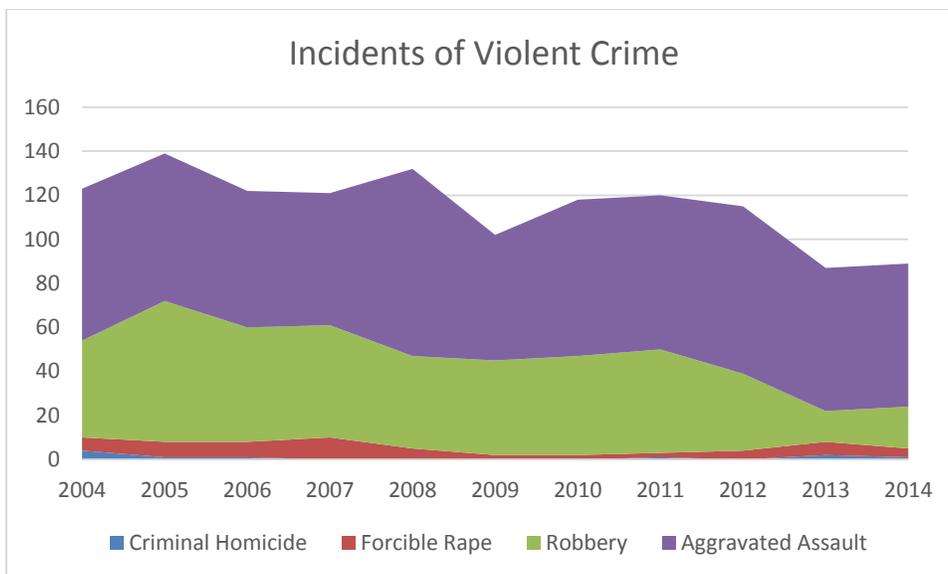


Figure 22: College Park Violent Crime Incidents, 2004-2014<sup>30</sup>

Secondly, although overall property crime incidents have declined 23% over the past 10 years, these crimes continue to be a driving force behind all crimes committed in College Park. While larcenies/thefts have declined overall since 2004, they continue to constitute the majority (69%) of all property crimes committed.

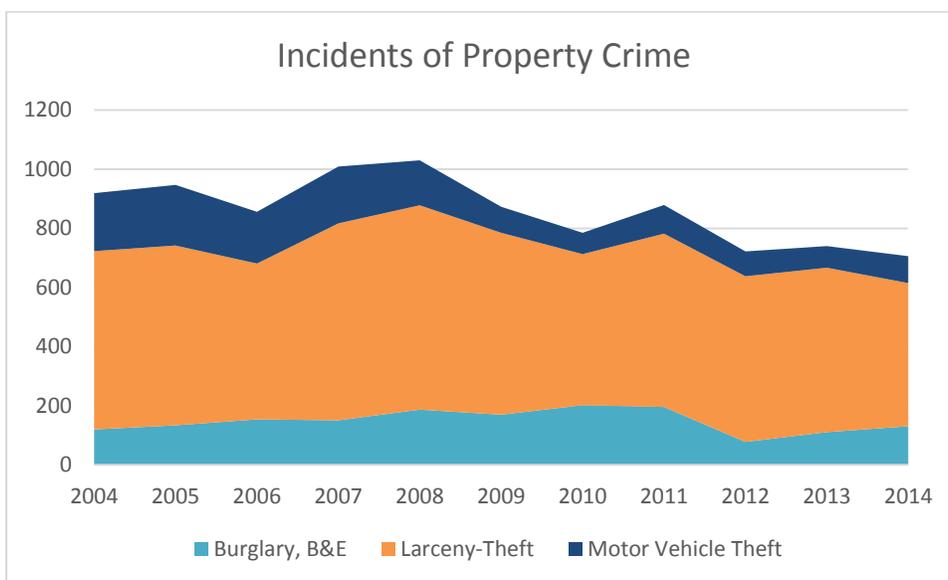


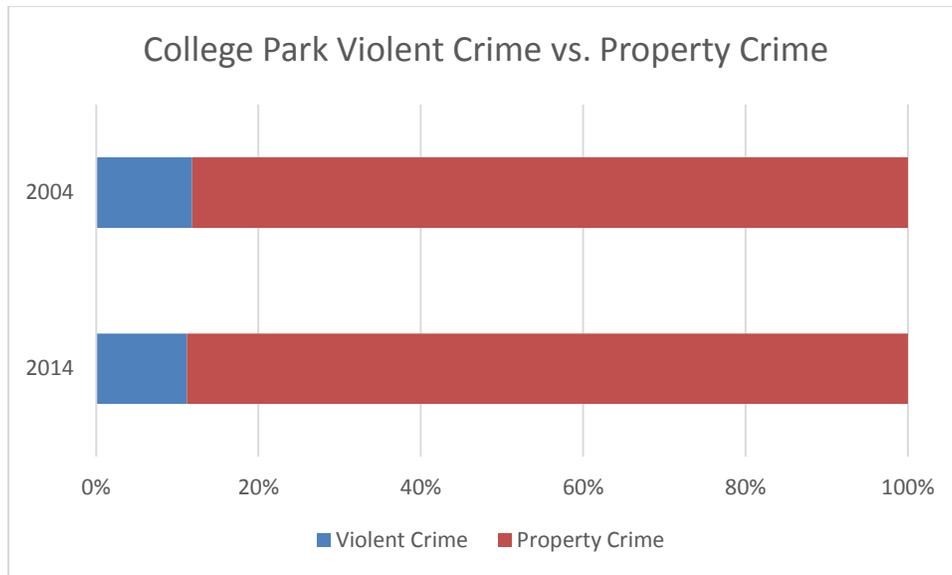
Figure 23: College Park Property Crime Incidents, 2004-2014<sup>31</sup>

While burglaries declined in 2012, they have recently begun to increase.

<sup>30</sup> Source: Prince George’s County Police Department.

<sup>31</sup> Source: Prince George’s County Police Department.

In terms of overall crimes committed, the chart below illustrates the relative distribution of crimes in College Park in 2004 and 2014. Proportionally, the number of violent crime incidents vs. property crime incidents is largely unchanged.



**Figure 24: College Park Crime Incidents by Type, 2000 and 2014<sup>32</sup>**

<sup>32</sup> Source: Prince George’s County Police Department.

## Financial and Staffing Statistics

### General Fund

#### Trends and Fund Balances

The City's fiscal health is strong with the commitment to retain the General Fund's fund balance to a minimum 25% general fund balance as a fiscal policy and primarily a pay-as-you-go approach to capital projects. The City's budget comprises the General Operating Fund, the Parking Debt Service Fund and the Unrestricted and Restricted Capital Project Funds. The overall condition of the City's debt and General Fund appear positive, with a large amount of headroom in terms of general obligation (GO) bond capacity and consistent General Fund balances and reserves.

The City of College Park is operating well within debt limits prescribed by the City Charter. The State of Maryland does not limit municipal debt. Rather, the Charter "limits the total outstanding general obligation debt of the City to five percent of the total real property taxable assessment."<sup>33</sup>

The City's 2014 CAFR specifies that the total assessed valuation of property in College Park was \$2.04 billion as of June 30, 2014. Five percent of this amount (representing the maximum GO debt specified by the Charter) is approximately \$102 million.

College Park currently carries outstanding GO debt related to two items:

**Table 10: College Park Outstanding General Obligation Bonds<sup>34</sup>**

	2013	2014
Sun Trust Bank- parking garage bond	\$ 7,652,000	\$ 7,369,000
Community legacy loans	\$ 450,000	\$ 450,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 8,102,000</b>	<b>\$ 7,819,000</b>

Outstanding debt in 2014 amounted to just 7.7% of the City's overall debt limit. The overall outstanding debt amount fell 3% from FY 2013.

The City's General Fund revenues and expenditures have also grown over the past 14 fiscal years. In FY2013, overall operating revenues were up 79% over FY2000 levels, and in the same year operating expenditures had increased 77% over expenditures in FY2000.

<sup>33</sup> Source: City of College Park, 2014 CAFR, page 19.

<sup>34</sup> Source: City of College Park, 2014 CAFR, page 19.

**Table 11: College Park General Fund, FY2000-FY2013<sup>35</sup>**

Year	Operating Revenue	Operating Expenditures	Surplus (deficit) After Transfers	Undesignated Unassigned Fund Balance	Reserve Balance as % of Next Year's Expenditure Budget
2000	7,925,257	7,188,809	378,054	2,507,355	30.31%
2001	8,206,595	7,963,668	312,842	2,291,676	25.27%
2002	8,425,339	7,862,662	72,838	2,483,508	26.02%
2003	8,839,777	8,387,816	(38,810)	2,766,147	28.29%
2004	8,905,991	8,251,475	(322,327)	2,056,242	19.53%
2005	9,773,782	8,733,736	254,468	2,619,714	24.96%
2006	11,053,754	9,077,070	1,196,384	4,028,163	34.86%
2007	11,113,418	9,595,276	(1,302,906)	2,734,819	23.08%
2008	11,647,913	10,330,679	324,682	3,154,391	24.62%
2009	12,661,100	10,906,047	499,718	3,900,880	29.43%
2010	12,758,641	11,314,099	466,367	4,356,077	34.43%
2011	14,407,349	11,541,492	1,819,522	5,649,562	40.11%
2012	14,753,324	12,215,429	157,946	5,944,767	40.34%
2013	14,214,088	12,711,292	(1,073,154)	4,325,009	29.57%

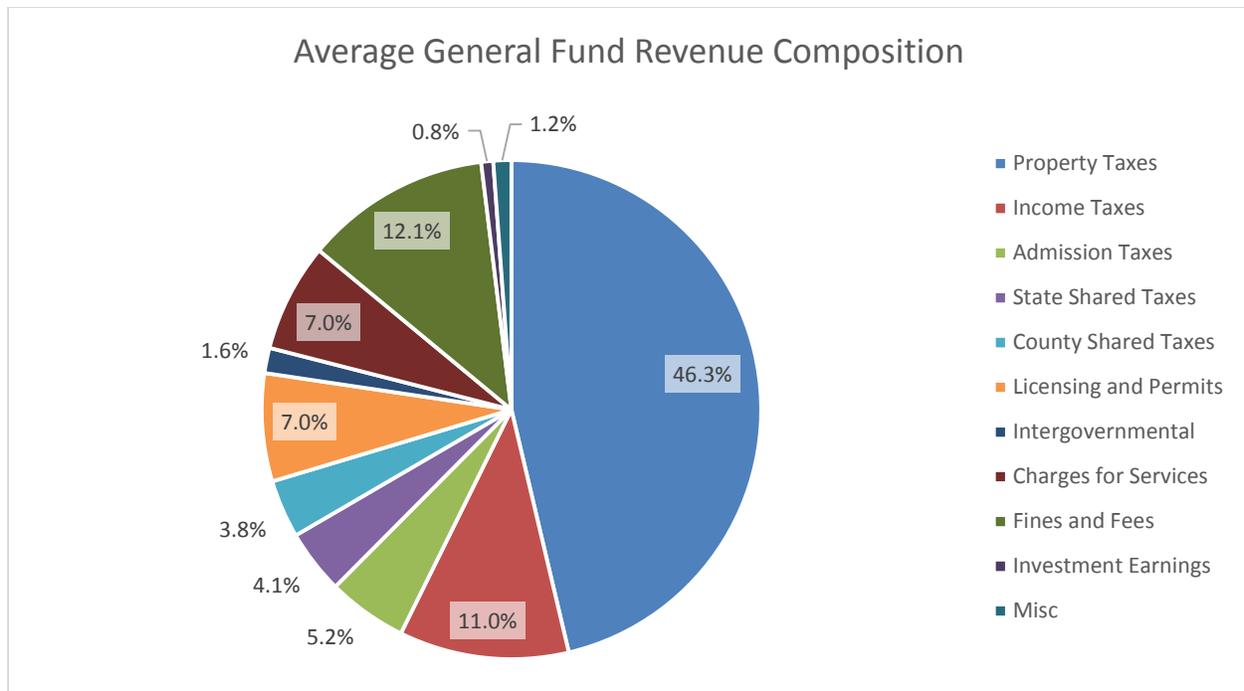
In most years the City achieves a budget surplus after transfers in the General Fund. The resulting growth in fund balance puts the City in a strong financial position. The City's policy is to maintain a reserve balance of at least 25% of the next year's expenditure budget; the City has only missed this target four times in the past 14 fiscal periods, and in only one year was it less than 20%.

### Revenue

The City maintains several sources of General Fund revenue, all of which add up to a diverse portfolio of income sources. Diversity in revenue sources is generally a sign of strength and a desirable goal for municipal governments, as various revenue streams help to hedge against economic downturns that affect some tax revenue more than others.

Over the past 10 fiscal periods, College Park's average General Fund revenues have come from the sources shown in the graphic below.

<sup>35</sup> Source: City of College Park Finance Department



**Figure 25: College Park Average General Fund Revenue Composition, FY2004-FY2013<sup>36</sup>**

Of all revenue sources, the top five on average during this period include:

- Property Taxes
- Fines and Fees
- Income Taxes
- Charges for Services
- Licenses and Permits

A closer look at top revenue sources reveals strong growth in each category. Property tax revenue has more than doubled since FY2004, and collections in the other categories have increased more than 35% each.

<sup>36</sup> Source: City of College Park Finance Department

**Table 12: College Park General Fund Top Revenue Sources, FY2000-FY2013<sup>37</sup>**

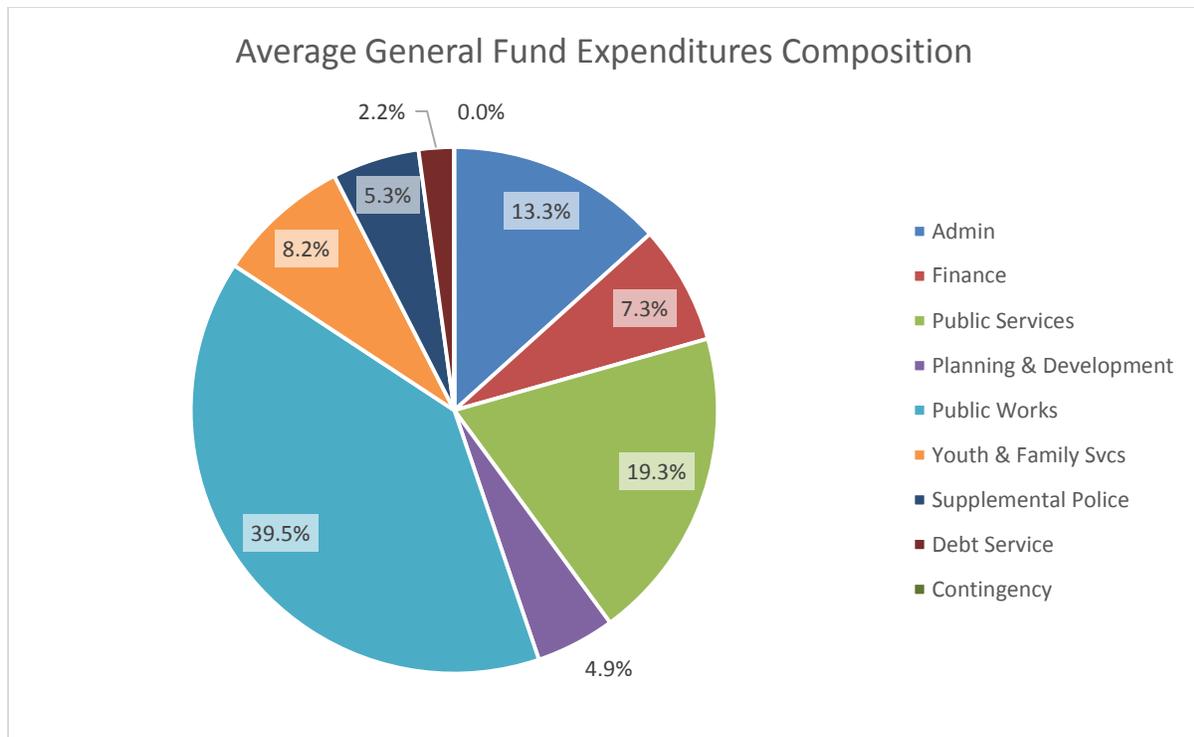
FY	Property Taxes	Fines and Fees	Income Taxes	Charges for Services	Licenses and Permits
2004	\$3,345,801	\$1,396,399	\$1,139,898	\$693,272	\$647,161
2005	\$3,947,200	\$1,239,728	\$1,214,258	\$691,240	\$644,625
2006	\$4,376,694	\$1,158,071	\$1,197,276	\$828,080	\$722,395
2007	\$4,812,810	\$962,210	\$1,270,633	\$830,490	\$690,761
2008	\$5,284,158	\$1,095,272	\$1,294,274	\$812,384	\$771,988
2009	\$6,386,736	\$1,054,227	\$1,274,166	\$823,703	\$894,393
2010	\$7,061,791	\$1,056,987	\$1,332,576	\$909,624	\$964,236
2011	\$6,922,610	\$2,784,738	\$1,377,541	\$934,245	\$1,004,730
2012	\$7,439,837	\$2,044,766	\$1,494,195	\$984,664	\$1,133,900
2013	\$7,472,148	\$1,963,264	\$1,582,308	\$947,868	\$1,054,982
% Growth FY2004 - FY2013	123%	41%	39%	37%	63%

This growth in revenue indicates strong property values and robust demand for services and permits, especially in recent years following the Great Recession.

### Expenditures

On average, over the past 10 fiscal periods, the City made expenditures from the General Fund in the service areas displayed in the following graphic.

<sup>37</sup> Source: City of College Park Finance Department



**Figure 26: College Park Average General Fund Expenditures Composition, FY2004-FY2013<sup>38</sup>**

Of all expenditures, the top five on average during this period include:

- Public Works
- Public Services
- Administration
- Youth and Family Services
- Finance

Growth from FY2004 – FY2013 in these categories is similar to growth in the top General Fund revenue categories, with Public Services expenditures more than doubling and Youth & Family Services also experiencing a significant increase.

<sup>38</sup> Source: City of College Park Finance Department

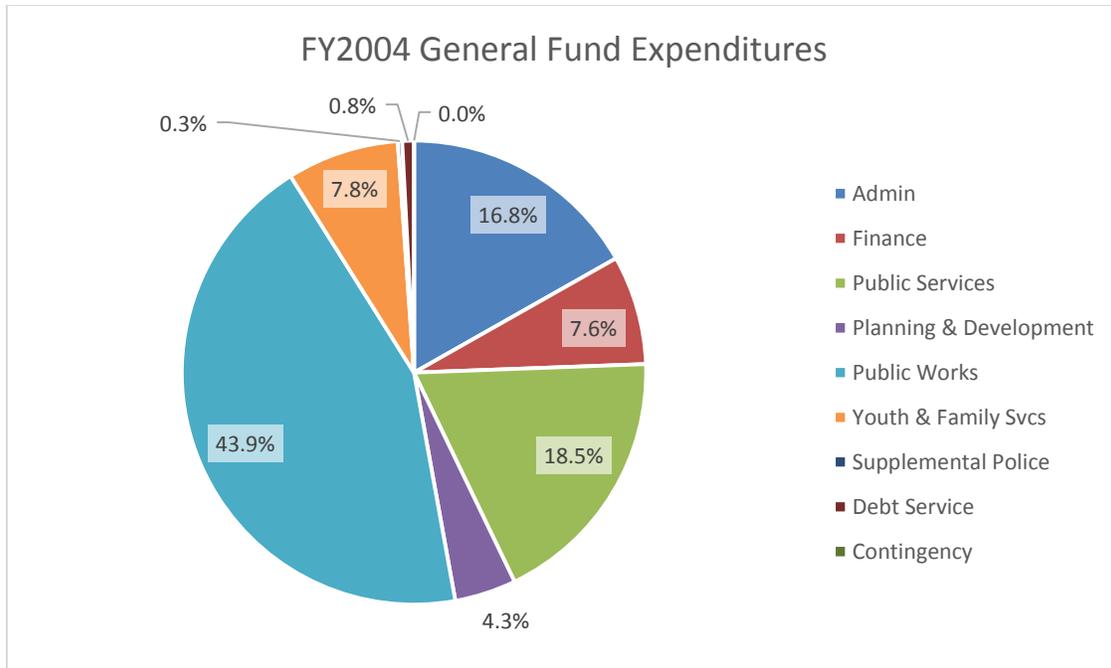
**Table 13: College Park General Fund Top Expenditure Areas, FY2000-FY2013<sup>39</sup>**

FY	Public Works	Public Services	Admin	Youth & Family Services	Finance
2004	\$3,624,822	\$1,522,569	\$1,386,155	\$644,074	\$628,347
2005	\$3,652,284	\$1,847,843	\$1,102,155	\$742,260	\$684,813
2006	\$3,727,144	\$1,934,726	\$1,221,213	\$707,118	\$612,945
2007	\$3,964,867	\$2,262,895	\$1,167,125	\$752,987	\$723,575
2008	\$4,263,915	\$2,540,511	\$1,290,109	\$835,414	\$816,172
2009	\$4,335,050	\$2,791,614	\$1,360,540	\$902,642	\$858,874
2010	\$4,317,396	\$3,066,343	\$1,318,925	\$981,712	\$895,913
2011	\$4,374,679	\$3,137,945	\$1,245,680	\$981,828	\$804,231
2012	\$4,352,121	\$3,389,586	\$1,300,554	\$1,034,545	\$773,566
2013	\$4,318,979	\$3,762,024	\$1,426,425	\$1,024,998	\$790,554
% Growth FY2004 - FY2013	19%	147%	3%	59%	26%

Other top expenditure areas have remained relatively stable or grown comparatively little from FY2004 levels, such as Public Works and Administration.

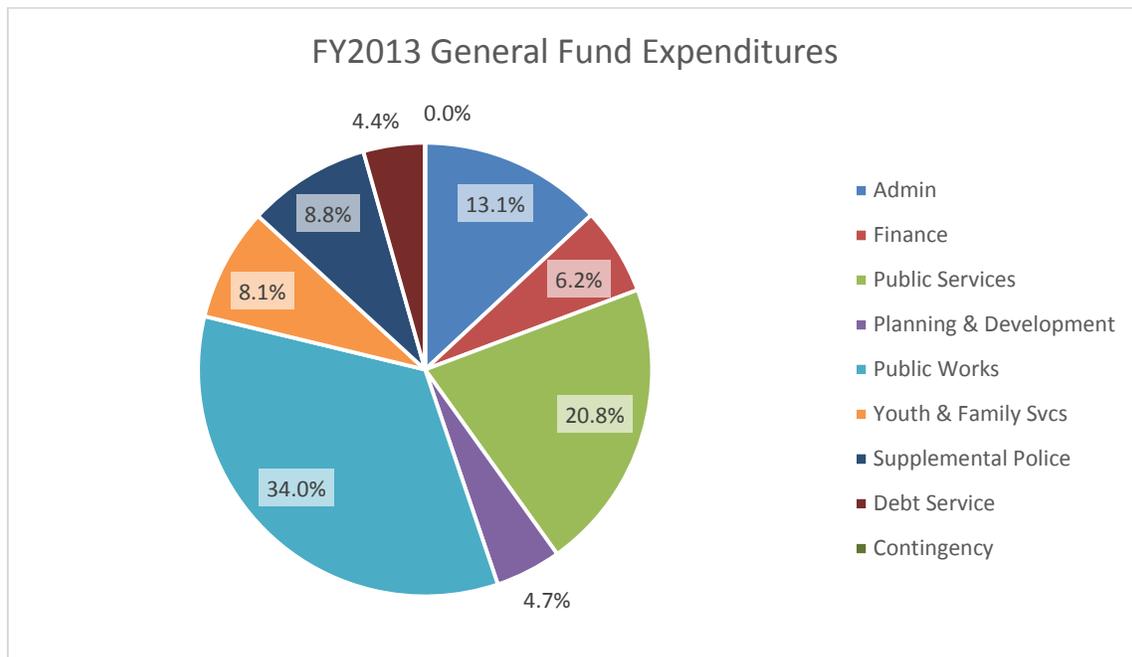
Another way to evaluate expenditures is to examine the change in the proportion of spending in each service area compared to the other service areas. In FY2004, expenditures were allocated as shown in the next figure.

<sup>39</sup> Source: City of College Park Finance Department



**Figure 27: College Park General Fund Expenditures, FY2004<sup>40</sup>**

In FY2013, expenditures were allocated as shown in the figure below.



**Figure 28: College Park General Fund Expenditures, FY2013<sup>41</sup>**

<sup>40</sup> Source: City of College Park Finance Department

<sup>41</sup> Source: City of College Park Finance Department

By comparing the two graphs, it becomes apparent that over the course of the last 10 fiscal years, Public Works expenditures account for 10% less of proportionate expenditures than they did in FY2004. It is important to remember that in real terms, Public Works expenditures - and expenditures in general - have increased. What has changed is that Public Works spending accounted for 34% of total expenditures in FY2013, when in FY2004 it accounted for 43.9%. On the other hand, Supplemental Police has increased 8.5% proportionally, from 0.3% of expenditures in FY2004 to 8.8% of expenditures in FY2013.

## Staffing

### Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Employees

Total staffing levels at the City of College Park have been quite stable over the past several years, with only minor changes in each service area, as shown in Table 14.

**Table 14: College Park Full-Time Equivalent Employees by Service Area, FY2005-FY2014<sup>42</sup>**

Year	Admin	Finance	Public Services	Planning	Youth & Family Services	Public Works	Total
2001	8.50	11.00	19.68	4.00	7.48	49.75	<b>100.41</b>
2002	8.50	10.00	19.80	5.00	7.25	49.58	<b>100.13</b>
2003	9.00	11.00	20.30	5.00	7.25	49.58	<b>102.13</b>
2004	8.00	11.00	20.30	4.00	7.25	49.00	<b>99.55</b>
2005	8.00	11.50	21.65	5.00	7.95	49.00	<b>103.10</b>
2006	8.00	11.80	23.83	5.00	7.95	50.00	<b>106.58</b>
2007	7.00	11.80	28.02	5.00	7.95	49.75	<b>109.52</b>
2008	7.00	11.80	28.52	5.00	8.45	49.75	<b>110.52</b>
2009	7.00	11.80	28.47	5.00	8.63	49.75	<b>110.65</b>
2010	7.00	11.80	28.50	5.00	8.63	50.00	<b>110.93</b>
2011	7.00	11.30	27.00	5.50	10.45	50.00	<b>111.25</b>
2012	7.00	10.80	29.89	5.30	9.41	50.15	<b>112.55</b>
2013	7.00	10.80	30.74	5.20	9.71	50.15	<b>113.60</b>
2014	7.75	10.70	31.34	5.20	9.71	50.35	<b>115.05</b>
2015	7.00	10.70	30.84	5.20	10.09	50.35	<b>114.18</b>

One exception to this trend is the Public Services Department, which has seen a growth of 11 full-time employees since FY2000. Youth and Family Services also added approximately 2.5 FTEs since FY2000. The number of employees in Finance has remained stable and the number of Administration employees has decreased since 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Source: City of College Park City Manager's Office

## Stakeholder Input

As part of the strategic planning process, key stakeholder groups were asked for feedback. Questions concentrated on the City's organization and leadership, perceptions of the community, and perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges to the community.

### Common Themes

Several common themes and perceptions emerged among stakeholders, including:

- A sense of physical, geographic disconnection in the community, chiefly due to highways dividing the north and south segments of the City;
- The perception that College Park is auto-centric and needs to diversify bicycle/pedestrian options for residents and improve access to transit;
- A sense of strong connections within individual neighborhoods and between neighbors, but weak interconnections between neighborhoods;
- The feeling some City services, especially parking and code enforcement, could be more effective and customer-friendly;
- Importance of the University of Maryland to the City of College Park and the need to work closely together to solve common problems:
  - Recognition that leadership in the City and UMD have improved relationships in the last few years by focusing on common goals but need to continue to be strengthened.
  - Residents not affiliated with UMD were more likely to perceive the University as encroaching in terms of property acquisition and student activities impacting residential neighborhoods.
- Tension between students and residents, with some residents perceiving an adversarial relationship and others a cooperative relationship;
- A lack of amenities for residents, particularly areas (such as green space, community center space, meeting space) where community interconnection and engagement can occur;
- The perception that College Park is growing, but not forming its own unique identity as a college town.

### Staff Survey

The City identified 18 employees to participate in a nine-question electronic survey prepared by The Novak Consulting Group. The employees were Department Heads and other key staff. Responses were received from nearly all who received the survey, and over three-quarters of respondents indicated they have been working for the City for more than 10 years.

### Mission, Vision, and Values

Most respondents indicated they clearly understood the City's mission, with no respondents indicating they did not understand or only understood a little. Respondents were roughly split on whether decisions are communicated clearly through the organization, with nearly three-quarters indicating that decisions were only "A little" or "Somewhat" clear as opposed to "A lot" or "Extremely" clear. When asked whether departments work effectively together, just under 60% of respondents indicated that they did, while slightly over 40% indicated that departments cooperate less effectively.

Table 15: College Park Department Head/Key Staff Mission, Vision, & Values, 2015<sup>43</sup>

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot	Extremely	Total Responses	Weighted Average
How clearly do you understand the City's mission?	0.00%	0.00%	18.75%	43.75%	37.50%	16.00	4.19
How clearly do you think decisions are communicated within the City?	0.00%	31.25%	43.75%	18.75%	6.25%	16.00	3.00
How effectively do you think departments within the City work together?	0.00%	18.75%	25.00%	50.00%	6.25%	16.00	3.44
How satisfied are you with the direction in which the City is moving?	6.25%	12.50%	50.00%	31.25%	0.00%	16.00	3.06

Respondents seemed unsure about how decisions are communicated in the City. Just over 30% of respondents indicated they did not understand leadership decisions very well, and less than 10% indicated that they understood decisions extremely well. Most respondents seemed to indicate that they only partially understood leadership decisions.

Participants were also mixed on whether they are satisfied with the direction the City is heading. Half of respondents (50%) indicated they were “Somewhat” satisfied. Another 30% indicated they were happy with the City’s direction, while the remaining 20% were unhappy with the organization’s direction.

### Goals and Performance

Most respondents clearly understand the goals and mission of their department. Only two respondents indicated their department’s goals or mission were not clear. Respondents also generally understand how their work contributes to their department’s overall goals and mission.

With respect to data collection, departments do not appear to have uniform practices when collecting data related to workload, efficiency, and outcomes. Nearly 50% of respondents indicated data collection was frequent or very frequent, and a further 35% stated that data collection was a practice in their departments. Three respondents (about 17%) indicated that their departments do not collect such data or collect it very infrequently.

About 44% of respondents indicated their department frequently uses the data they collect to make improvements and changes in operations. The remaining respondents were split, with 25% stating that improvements due to data collection were only made occasionally, and the remaining 31% indicating improvements were made rarely or not at all.

<sup>43</sup> Source: The Novak Consulting Group Survey of Department Heads and Key Staff.

**Table 16: College Park Department Head/Key Staff Goals and Performance, 2015<sup>44</sup>**

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot	Extremely	Total Responses	Weighted Average
<b>How clearly do you understand the goals of your department?</b>	5.88%	0.00%	5.88%	35.29%	52.94%	17.00	4.29
<b>How clearly do you understand the mission of your department?</b>	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%	41.18%	52.94%	17.00	4.41
<b>How clearly do you understand the ways in which your work contributes to achieving the goals of your department?</b>	0.00%	6.25%	6.25%	31.25%	56.25%	16.00	4.38
<b>How frequently does your department collect data related to workload, efficiency, or outcomes?</b>	5.88%	11.76%	35.29%	23.53%	23.53%	17.00	3.47
<b>How frequently does your department use data to identify inefficiencies in operations?</b>	12.50%	18.75%	25.00%	31.25%	12.50%	16.00	3.13
<b>How effectively does your department anticipate issues and problems?</b>	0.00%	11.76%	17.65%	64.71%	5.88%	17.00	3.65
<b>How frequently are employees in your department encouraged to improve work processes?</b>	5.88%	17.65%	5.88%	64.71%	5.88%	17.00	3.47

Overall, respondents rated their departments as very effective at anticipating issues and problems, and most stated that employees were encouraged to improve work processes (although 30% of respondents indicated this encouragement came only sometimes or rarely).

<sup>44</sup> Source: The Novak Consulting Group Survey of Department Heads and Key Staff.

## Strengths and Weaknesses

There was agreement on several strengths and weaknesses affecting the City government. Many of the issues raised were derived from answers to open-ended questions and are listed in the table below. Note that all tables in this section are organized by responses; comments that were mentioned more often appear at the top of each table, while comments mentioned less often are listed toward the bottom.

**Table 17: City of College Park Strengths and Weaknesses<sup>45</sup>**

Strengths	Weaknesses
Public Works (trash, leaves, snow)	Decision-making and leadership
Response/Outreach to residents	PR/Marketing/External communication
Aggressive parking and code enforcement	Social media/online engagement
High-quality service provision	IT support hours, frequent IT changes
Staff is friendly and responds quickly and efficiently to residents	Attending to resident needs
Sustainability	Council becoming too involved
Strong City Manager	Internal communication
Public safety saturation	Matching resources with priorities
Fiscal conservation	Employee productivity
Mayor & Council are attentive to the needs and requests of residents.	General staff support & recognition of good staff effort
Open and inclusive	Not focusing on core mission
Growth and development	Revenue challenges
Improved benefit package for employees	Council districts, composition not reflective of community
Relatively low taxes	Laborious business processes
	Negative relationship with UMD
	Code enforcement activities

Notable strengths include services provided by Public Works, with particular emphasis on leaf, trash, and snow removal. Department heads/key staff also indicated City service delivery is high-quality and reliable.

The weakness most often cited by participants pertained to a lack of clear decision-making and leadership skills in the organization. Specifically, respondents mentioned the need for overall strategic planning, succession planning for retiring/departing staff, a lack of professional development opportunities, and a sense that City leadership is too focused on driving down costs impacting the ability to provide quality service.

Respondents suggested a variety of projects and programs they would like to see City government pursue. A summarized list of projects follows; projects mentioned most often are at the top of the list.

<sup>45</sup> Source: The Novak Consulting Group Survey of Department Heads and Key Staff.

**Table 18: City of College Park Project/Program Ideas<sup>46</sup>**

Project/Program Ideas
Build new City Hall
Upgrade City software
Complete streets with bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure
Reevaluate positions, wages, salaries
Provide better improvements on Route 1
Perform a third-party audit of all departments
Hire City Information Officer/develop public communication plan
Improve/build a new Public Works facility
Provide staff with proper equipment and training
Additional "Live near your work" programs
Develop compensation philosophy for pay system
Provide more comprehensive website
Provide more services to seniors
Cooperate more effectively with UMD
Assess the long-term capital needs of all City facilities
Provide easier access to City Hall/Public Services on UM Shuttle
Eliminate on-street residential parking
Reduce student rental homes in neighborhoods
Provide healthcare for retiring/retired employees
Develop a technology plan
Develop a succession plan for retiring Department Heads
Acquire property to resell for development
Replace City vehicles before they wear out
Merge ongoing (e.g. CPCUP, NQoL, CMAST, etc.) quality of life projects into one long term continuous quality improvement process
Address stormwater issues
Create a downtown redevelopment plan

Building a new City Hall was by far the most popular suggestion among respondents, with several indicating it would provide a good opportunity to consolidate departments under one roof and increase inter-departmental cooperation and communication.

Many of these suggestions mirror the stated goals of City strategic planning documents, including the existing Strategic Plan and the 2010 Route 1 Corridor Sector Plan. For example, the current Strategic Plan calls for consistent high-quality and cost-effective public services. While key staff respondents seem to agree that this has been done in some areas (like Public Works), they also seem to agree that additional professional development and training is needed in order to maintain quality service delivery.

<sup>46</sup> Source: The Novak Consulting Group Survey of Department Heads and Key Staff.

In terms of strengths or attributes for which College Park should be known in the future, respondents again provided a variety of suggestions, as shown in the table below.

**Table 19: City of College Park Future Attributes<sup>47</sup>**

Attributes for which College Park should be known
Leaders in sustainability
Effective & efficient public services
Collaborative relationship with UMD
Effective Mayor and Council
Leader in downtown revitalization
Fiscally responsible
Technologically advanced
Innovative
Outstanding website
Providing the best possible services for the residents in an efficient and effective manner
Destination location
Leader in community-building
Professional staff
A real college town
Leader in public safety
Attractive City Hall complex with civic space
Partner in successful economic development and place-making
Diverse, productive, customer-oriented workforce

These responses largely parallel feedback obtained by The Novak Consulting Group in focus groups and in online resident surveys, as described in the next section.

### Stakeholder Focus Groups

The City of College Park identified four stakeholder groups of about 15 participants each to gather feedback on the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC). Approximately 55 individuals participated. These focus groups comprised individuals in the following areas:

- **Group 1:** Business and property owners;
- **Group 2:** Non-profit, arts, and recreation organizations and schools;
- **Group 3:** Institutions: University of Maryland, the College Park City-University Partnership, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and Prince George's County;
- **Group 4:** Civic leaders: Appointed boards and commissions, Civic association leaders, and other Civic leaders.

In mid-January, The Novak Consulting Group facilitated feedback meetings with each of the four groups to gather input and collect data for the SWOC analysis. Meetings were held at College Park City Hall and at Davis Hall. Feedback was noted without attribution, and the information presented in this section is a compilation of all responses recorded in the focus groups. Unless otherwise noted, feedback is listed in each table starting with the most-mentioned and ends with the least-mentioned.

<sup>47</sup> Source: The Novak Consulting Group Survey of Department Heads and Key Staff.

## Perceptions of College Park

It is important to remember that perceptions are neither “right” nor “wrong,” and focus group participants were advised that disagreements about perceptions are natural. The point of gathering perceptions is to highlight attributes and issues that are on the community’s mind which may inform the SWOC analysis and the Strategic Planning process overall. Top perceptions proved to be common themes which dominated discussions throughout the SWOC process.

**Table 20: Focus Group Top Perceptions of College Park<sup>48</sup>**

Positive Perceptions	Negative Perceptions
Good momentum; changing and growing for the better, but needing additional change	Not a "college town," but a college with a town; City beholden to UMD and focused on students
Diverse neighborhoods and population	Run-down structures; shabby homes and businesses
Friendly, caring neighbors	City divided physically/geographically north/south and lacks a center
Convenient location, accessible, good transportation options	Disconnection between residents, students, neighborhoods, associations and City
Lots of potential	Auto-centric with too much traffic and a lack of free parking, particularly on Route 1
Vibrant UMD campus	Frustrating City organization a leadership that don't listen to citizens
Good amenities, generally good place to live	Unsafe; prevalence of crime
Quiet and safe	Generally dysfunctional; intractable problems

On the positive side, respondents generally agreed that College Park was experiencing change for the better, a growing and improving economy, and an overall improving environment. However, several respondents noted that the amount of change was not presently enough and cautioned against losing too much momentum, or losing overall focus in the midst of too much change. Respondents also generally agreed that College Park is a town full of diverse neighbors and neighborhoods, and that strong ties within individual neighborhoods continue to be a hallmark of the community. Respondents praised the caliber and friendliness of their neighbors and also listed College Park’s accessibility and location in the greater metro area as positive attributes for the City.

On the negative side, respondents noted a perceived imbalance in relations between the City and the University of Maryland, with most respondents believing UMD is in a more commanding position and unduly influences City decision-making. Additionally, many respondents commented on the overall appearance of College Park with respect to structural integrity and beautification, noting the presence of abandoned and run-down structures that blight the town’s appearance. Geographic disconnection between the north and south sides of the City also emerged as a top perception, with many respondents commenting that this physical sense of separation naturally led to disconnection and lack of community identity between the two halves of the City. Respondents also focused on transit and traffic, and the need for College Park to improve bicycle/pedestrian options and safety in the City.

There were also similarities and differences between groups. The business and institutional focus groups (Groups 1 and 3) both mentioned perceptions of College Park as having much

<sup>48</sup> Source: Stakeholder Focus Groups conducted by The Novak Consulting Group, January 12-13, 2015.

potential, but business owners also described an unfriendly business climate, especially with respect to permitting and taxes. Civic leaders (Group 4) highlighted positive perceptions regarding neighborhoods and the overall friendliness of neighbors in the community.

The non-profit and civic leader focus groups (Groups 2 and 4) also mentioned perceptions of disconnection and disjointedness within the community that businesses and institutional leaders (Groups 1 and 3) did not emphasize. These perceptions were largely between residents themselves, or between residents and students. The non-profit and civic leader focus groups (Groups 2 and 4) also highlighted physical disconnections, particularly a sense that the north and south sides of College Park are divided geographically, physically, and socially.

### Positive City Performance

When asked what the City of College Park does well in terms of government and public services, respondents expressed significant praise and support for the City's Public Works Department, particularly with respect to snow and leaf removal and trash collection. Respondents also cited the general responsiveness of City staff and effective Councilmember outreach as areas in which the City performs well.

**Table 21: Focus Group Positive Perceptions of College Park Government and Service Delivery**<sup>49</sup>

The City of College Park excels at:
Excellent and responsive Public Works services (snow, leaves, trash)
Overall responsiveness and interacting with residents
Helpful and interested Councilmembers
Working collaboratively with the University of Maryland
Asking for citizen input, listening
Supporting community organizations and assets
Maintaining a clean and aesthetically pleasing environment
Issuing parking tickets, parking enforcement
Supporting education (other than UMD)
Being idea-driven, expansive thinking, innovation, energetic

Many respondents listed the cooperative advantages of the City's relationship with UMD as a positive, along with the City's desire to solicit and listen to stakeholder feedback. Respondents stated that they felt the City generally listened to what they had to say and was interested in their honest feedback.

Non-profit leaders (Group 2) mentioned the City's support for external organizations, particularly nonprofits, as a strength of City government. Participants in the institutional focus group (Group 3) stressed the City government's capacity for creative thinking, and also discussed the City's public/private partnerships (particularly with UMD). Participants in the civic leaders' focus group (Group 4) particularly mentioned responsible administration of the City's finances, and praised the City's efforts to maintain the aesthetics and cleanliness of the City.

<sup>49</sup> Source: Stakeholder Focus Groups conducted by The Novak Consulting Group, January 12-13, 2015.

## Improvements in City Performance

The table below indicates the most frequently mentioned areas respondents cited for making improvements to City operations. Respondents generally agreed that parking enforcement, code enforcement, and front desk staff needed more training on how to properly interact and communicate with City residents. Many respondents shared experiences in which parking enforcement staff avoided interacting with them in the process of issuing parking tickets. Similar complaints about code enforcement staff were made during the focus group sessions, and a few participants mentioned negative experiences when dealing with front desk staff at City Hall.

**Table 22: Focus Group Areas of Improvement for College Park Government and Service Delivery**<sup>50</sup>

The City of College Park could improve upon:
Courteousness and communication of City staff, particularly parking enforcement, code enforcement, front desk
Uneven enforcement of Use and Occupancy (UNO) permits
Overzealous parking enforcement
Recruiting/attracting businesses desired by the community
Too much catering to students; lack of enforcement on student lawbreakers
Communication to the community from Councilmembers
Considering the aesthetic and traffic ramifications of development along Route 1
Marketing, promotion, attraction efforts
Supporting startups and entrepreneurs
Managing goals and effective decision-making

Additional areas for improvement cited by the focus group participants included moderating overzealous parking enforcement activities, and marketing, recruiting, and attracting new businesses to College Park. Some residents also expressed concerns about law enforcement not proactively addressing issues with UMD students, particularly related to drinking, parties, and noise.

Participants in the business focus group in particular expressed frustration with the Use and Occupancy (UNO) permitting process, indicating that obtaining a permit was often confusing and that penalties were unevenly enforced. This may have roots in variations between Prince George County's UNO process and the City's UNO process. Group 1 also discussed unclear signage provisions and suggested a more equitable approach to sign enforcement was necessary.

Participants in the non-profit and civic leaders' focus group cited uneven enforcement of property maintenance codes as additional areas City staff should focus on improving, with several respondents suggesting the City take a more proactive approach to property maintenance enforcement.

Participants in both the institutional and the civic leaders' focus groups suggested the City improve working partnerships with UMD, but the perspectives of the groups varied slightly. Respondents in the institutional focus group suggested the City strengthen existing partnerships and explore partnerships in novel areas, such as marketing, outreach, tourism, and recreation. Some participants in the civic leaders' focus group had a perception that the relationship between the City and UMD that appeared fractious with UMD dominating conversation and action in the City.

<sup>50</sup> Source: Stakeholder Focus Groups conducted by The Novak Consulting Group, January 12-13, 2015.

## SWOC (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Challenges) Analysis

The focus groups were asked a series of four questions about College Park as a community:

- What are the community's strengths?
- What are its weaknesses?
- What opportunities should the community capitalize on in the future?
- What threats or challenges may undermine the community's efforts to improve?

Responses to these questions were varied, but respondents tended to focus around a core set of central issues. Many respondents echoed sentiments articulated in the first exercise (overall perceptions of College Park) during this portion of the discussion as well. A table outlining the most-mentioned SWOC responses is shown below.

**Table 23: Focus Group SWOC Responses<sup>51</sup>**

Community Strengths Include:	Community Weaknesses Include:
Access, location, convenience, transportation	Not walkable/bikeable, unsafe to walk or bike, lack of supporting infrastructure
Strong neighborhoods and community interactions	Disparity, lack of continuity between north & south sides of the City
The University of Maryland	Poor marketing of amenities
Amenities (cultural, recreation, entertainment)	Lack of student involvement in City affairs
Green space, open space, parks, trails	Auto-centric; too much traffic
Public safety presence and feeling secure	Pervasive negative perceptions
Economy and jobs	Poor public schools
Visitors, people passing through the City	Inconsistent, uneven code enforcement
Housing market, available land	Lack of amenities (brewery, cultural space, incubator space) for non-students
Events, farmer's markets	Inability to connect with non-native speakers
Community Opportunities Include:	Community Challenges Include:
Developing catalyst spaces, critical spaces, green space, open space, gathering centers, parks, community agriculture	Fear of change and progress; decision paralysis; loss of momentum
Increasing walkability/bikeability & transit options	Too much traffic
Increasing collaboration with UMD, leveraging UMD as an asset	Old, run-down buildings; blight; vacant lots and spaces
Marketing the City, UMD	Too little parking
Utilizing Metro station more effectively; Purple Line	Loss of property tax revenue; destruction of tax base
Improving urban scale and aesthetic appearance throughout City, particularly in neighborhoods	Lack of awareness and information re: development, opportunities
Revitalizing Route 1	UMD's size and continued growth relative to the City
Utilizing and increasing the diversity of the population	Unresponsive landlords; lack of reinvestment
Attracting people to live in College Park	Lack of continuity and vision
Potential FBI location in College Park	Lack of control over UMD and other large developers

<sup>51</sup> Source: Stakeholder Focus Groups conducted by The Novak Consulting Group, January 12-13, 2015.

## Strengths

With respect to strengths, respondents largely focused on geographic and people-oriented assets. Access, location, and the convenience of living in College Park were among the most-cited strengths of the community, followed by the quality of inter-personal relationships in the City and the presence of strong institutions (such as the University of Maryland). Participants also cited visitors as sources of community strength, particularly with respect to community events (such as farmer's markets).

Aside from these common strengths, each group also identified particular attributes that other groups did not mention or did not discuss in depth. Participants in the business focus group (Group 1) identified the volume of traffic flowing through College Park as a major strength and a potential source of revenue for businesses. Non-profit leaders (Group 2) mentioned diversity in the community's residential population, and also praised the community's jobs and housing markets. Those in the institutional focus group (Group 3) cited specific attributes of UMD that support the community, such as UMD's strength as a regional employer and research institution, its campus space, and programs for children supported by the school. Civic leaders (Group 4) discussed many specific community amenities, including the municipal airport, Lake Artemisia, farmers' markets, and other recreational assets. Respondents in this group also identified community safety as a primary asset.

## Weaknesses

Nearly each of the strengths identified had a corresponding weakness which respondents highlighted. While access and location are a boon to the community, the volume of traffic is also perceived negatively by respondents, and many participants noted a comparative lack of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Additionally, while respondents noted the presence of quality amenities in the City as a strength, they cited lack of marketing efforts and a general lack of awareness of those amenities as a weakness.

Participants generally indicated that alongside a marketing/information gap, negative perceptions of College Park seemed to be persistent and may contribute to an overall lack of other amenities desired by non-student residents, such as a brewery, more cultural/arts spaces, and incubator spaces for small businesses. Finally, while the focus groups identified strong neighborhood communities as a strength, they also cited comparatively few efforts to connect with some minority groups in the City, particularly those who do not speak English.

Departures from these themes between the groups tended to center around specific issues pertinent to each group. For example, businesses (Group 1) began discussion on this question by bringing up crime against businesses and employees. Both businesses and institutional focus group participants (Groups 1 and 3) also spent time discussing the lack of quality public schools as being an impediment to attracting people who want to relocate to the community.

Non-profit leaders (Group 2) related stories regarding uneven targeting of community programs, saying that certain groups are targeted more often for outreach, leaving others without assistance. This group also discussed weaknesses in community volunteering, in terms of finding volunteers, coordinating with UMD to reach student volunteers, and a general lack of student involvement in the City's government.

Participants from the institutional focus group (Group 3) discussed the "UMD bubble" as a community weakness, which in turn led to conversations about students being disruptive in neighborhoods and tensions arising between residents and students. This group also identified

a lack of amenities off-campus for students to visit (such as a brewery or gallery) as a potential contributor to the “bubble.”

Civic leaders (Group 4) discussed the location of City Hall as a weakness which perpetuates a sense of a division between the north and south sides of the City. This group also discussed the quality of redevelopment in the City and suggested that while much new development had occurred, community residents are looking for amenities and City actions that will help build community in neighborhoods. Specific mentions included a community center, a dog park, library, and open meeting spaces. Some participants indicated that while much of the new development in the City was good for students, long-time residents did not have any new developments geared for them or their neighborhoods.

### **Opportunities**

Taken together, these strengths and weaknesses inform discussion on opportunities and challenges to College Park. Many of the opportunities complement articulated goals in the City’s current strategic plan, the CPCUP District Vision 2020 Plan, the 2010 Central U.S. Route 1 Corridor Sector Plan, the 2014 College Park-Riverdale Park Transit District Development Plan, the Maryland Sustainable Communities Action Plan, and the Neighborhood Stabilization and Quality of Life Report.

When asked to look forward at what opportunities may lay ahead for College Park, respondents identified the ability to address many of the concerns about amenities through continued revitalization and business attraction efforts. Groups 1 and 3 suggested focusing on creating opportunities for new startups and creating a startup culture in the City. In many ways, that complements a suggestion by civic leaders (Group 4) to target “quirky, cool” businesses that would help craft a unique identity for College Park.

Most groups suggested a renewed effort to encourage bicycle/pedestrian and urban infrastructure redevelopment throughout the City, particularly on Route 1. Potential Metro expansions and the ability to utilize Metro stations more effectively as development hubs were also mentioned a number of times.

Respondents also suggested partnering with the University of Maryland on marketing and attraction efforts to curb negative perceptions and to attract new people to choose College Park as a home. In terms of large developments, a few residents mentioned the potential expansion of the FBI into the College Park area as an opportunity for the community to grow and attract new residents.

Participants in the civic leader focus group (Group 4) in particular discussed opportunities to provide neighborhood enhancement as the community’s demographics evolve, such as providing aging-in-place programs, enhancing the appearance of neighborhoods, and generally improving walkability in the City. Many respondents expressed a hope that neighborhood-level revitalization would attract more faculty to live in College Park (a core component of the CPCUP Vision Plan), along with young families.

### **Challenges and Threats**

Nearly all groups listed too much traffic and too little parking space as challenges for the community. The groups also universally discussed fear of change, decision paralysis, lack of vision, and loss of momentum as major challenges to continued revitalization. Respondents suggested various sources of these attitudes, including broken trust between residents and the

government, the sheer volume of decisions community leaders are faced with, and the diversity of work involved in redevelopment.

Participants in the business focus group (Group 1) also described slumlords, absentee landlords, and blighted lots as a continuing threat to the community’s stability, along with increased business taxes.

Respondents in the non-profit and civic leaders’ groups (Groups 2 and 4) discussed property acquisition by the University as a potential challenge in the future, as continued expansion could impact the City’s property tax revenues. Residents also voiced concerns about a larger University exerting even more control over the City’s actions and attention.

### Future Vision

Respondents suggested a variety of words and phrases to suggest what their optimal vision of a future College Park would look like. When asked how they would like to describe College Park in the coming years, most respondents chose very active words, like “bustling,” “fun,” and “dynamic.” Other words focusing on the community were also relatively common, such as “family,” “friendly,” “safe,” and “inclusive.”

**Table 24: Focus Group Responses – The Future of College Park<sup>52</sup>**

I would describe the future College Park as:
Bustling, fun, vibrant, dynamic
Friendly, community and family-oriented
Inclusive, unified, cohesive, connected
Bikeable/walkable/robust transportation
Safe, peaceful
A destination, nice place to visit, pleasant
Modern, cultured, artistic, unique
Eco-friendly, sustainable
Opportunity
Diverse
Prosperous, stable
Advancing, developing, innovative, creative
Great college town, a model college town
Desirable, beautiful
A smart place to live
Fixed, healed, transformed
Affordable

Many respondents also mentioned sustainability, walkability/bikeability, and aesthetic qualities like “beautiful” and “green.”

<sup>52</sup> Source: Stakeholder Focus Groups conducted by The Novak Consulting Group, January 12-13, 2015.

## Resident Online Surveys

### City Survey

The City of College Park recently completed its own resident survey, which focused on resident satisfaction with City operations. That survey received more than 700 responses and a large volume of open-ended feedback. At the time of this report, results from the City’s survey were still being finalized and are scheduled to be presented to the community in mid-February 2015. However, preliminary data affirms some of the trends and observations discussed in the focus groups conducted by The Novak Consulting Group.

For example, many residents in the City’s survey affirmed the quality of Public Works services in College Park. Resident responses to questions regarding parking enforcement and code enforcement tended towards more neutral ratings (as opposed to extremes like “excellent” or “poor”), which many residents echoed and qualified in focus group discussions. Respondents to the City’s survey also rated pedestrian and cycling activity among the most unsafe activities in College Park, which also comports with The Novak Consulting Group’s findings. In a question about community amenities, respondents indicated the need for more green space and/or community gardens, which also surfaced in focus group feedback.

### Novak Resident Survey

The Novak Consulting Group conducted an online survey in mid-January to complement the City’s efforts. This survey was available on the City’s website for approximately two weeks and garnered 223 responses. Questions largely mirrored those questions put to department heads/key staff and the stakeholder focus groups. The survey was not designed to be scientific statistically but rather to provide additional community feedback into the strategic planning process. Nearly 90% of respondents to the online survey indicated that they lived in the city limits of College Park. Respondents’ tenure in the City varied widely, with a wide variation in terms of new residents and long-term residents. The following figure provides a detailed overview of the number of years respondents have lived in College Park.

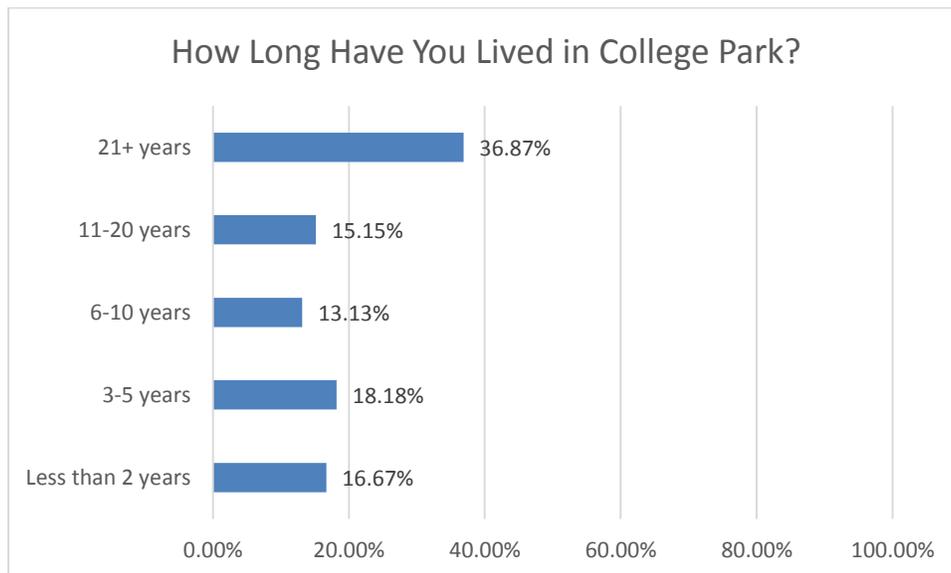


Figure 29: TNCG Resident Survey - How long have you lived in College Park?<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Source: Resident survey conducted by The Novak Consulting Group, January 16-27, 2015.

More than 75% of respondents indicated they owned a home in College park, with just under 25% reporting that they rent.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they do not own businesses in College Park. Of 223 respondents, only 11 participants indicated they were business owners in the City. Of those who replied that they were business owners, most stated that they have owned a business for more than 10 years.

Forty respondents (18%) indicated they were currently enrolled at UMD.

Age distribution among respondents varied widely, with good representation among all age groups over 18 years of age. There were no respondents under 18 years old.

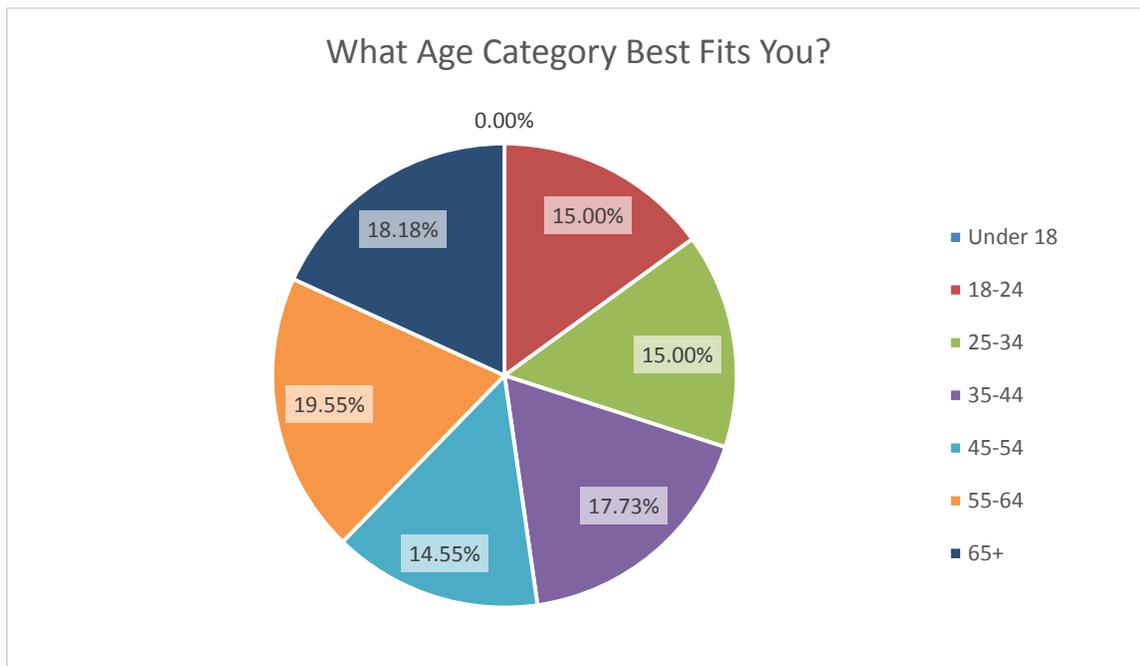


Figure 30: TNCG Resident Survey – Which age category fits you?<sup>54</sup>

### Strengths

When asked what two to three attributes most described College Park, respondents generally cited the University of Maryland, excellent Public Works services, a good sense of community, the City's location, accessibility, and proximity to Washington DC. Other strengths listed less frequently included particular amenities, such as green space/trails, safety, housing, and restaurants.

These themes more or less parallel feedback heard from the department head/Key staff survey and the Stakeholder focus groups. The community's strengths seem to revolve around institutional fixtures such as the University, along with geographic factors that make College Park easy to access and live in. Social and cultural factors, such as a sense of family-

<sup>54</sup> Source: Resident survey conducted by The Novak Consulting Group, January 16-27, 2015.

friendliness and overall community, were also mentioned numerous times as positives for the City.

### **Weaknesses**

Respondents were also asked for two or three areas of weakness in which College Park has room to improve. Here again, responses tended to mirror those in previous outreach efforts, focusing on issues like traffic, noise, low-quality development, blighted structures, and too much of a focus on students.

Online responses also raised the issue of code enforcement, with some suggesting not enough noise enforcement activity was taking place. This paralleled some discussion in the civic leaders group (Focus Group 4) pertaining to poor student/neighbor relations, especially on the issue of off-campus parties.

Many respondents in the online survey used the word “options” to describe a lack of available amenities in the City, from restaurants and shops to parking, housing, and schools. Notably, the online survey gathered more responses geared towards improving restaurant and business quality in the City, particularly in the downtown area. In many ways this parallels responses from civic leaders (Focus Group 4), who identified a lack of “cool, unique” dining and shopping opportunities that would set College Park apart from other retail areas.

Online respondents also raised the issue of housing, with many participants saying the ratio of rentals to home owners in the City was too high, and that more owner-occupied housing should be a priority. This perspective differs from the latest U.S. Census figures on home ownership vs. rentals, which indicate more of an even split as opposed to a dramatic difference in owners vs. renters.

### **Programs to Pursue**

Respondents suggested a wide variety of program areas which touched on the same subjects discussed by staff and the focus groups. On the issue of development, many residents encouraged more walkable, dense development that appeals to students and long-time residents. Other respondents articulated a wariness of recent redevelopment efforts, and suggested the City was becoming too urbanized and too built up.

There is a general sense among participants that Route 1 should be beautified and improved. Several respondents suggested creating more green space along Route 1, while others articulated concerns about pedestrian safety/jaywalking, calming traffic, and the appearance of buildings along the corridor. While no respondents directly mentioned the 2010 Central U.S. Route 1 Corridor Sector Plan, it appears that many ideas cited by residents fit with the Plan’s overall goals.

Respondents also described a need for additional programs in a variety of areas: senior programs, family and child recreational programs (such as a children’s summer camp and family health), daycare programs, and sustainability programs (such as a rewards system for recycling), were all mentioned. Less-mentioned were programs such as mosquito abatement, strengthening the City’s rental licensing program, and programs to encourage more home ownership in the City.

Community was another source of ideas for potential projects, including constructing a new community center, community gardening spaces, and providing more community events and service projects. This intersects with a perceived lack of community interconnectedness as

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Strengthening organizations from the inside out.*

identified in the focus groups, and with focus group suggestions to create more open and interactive spaces where City residents can congregate.

### **Future Description**

When asked to identify a few words they'd like to use to describe College Park in the future, many participants stuck with the theme of community – a vibrant, dynamic, diverse, close, strong, walkable, inclusive, and safe community.

The theme of being a “college town” was also prevalent in responses, in terms of College Park becoming a unique place that is attractive to students but also family-friendly. Many participants also stressed modernity and sustainability as key factors to achieving this goal; they described the future College Park as a place where residents and visitors have options and choices in terms of dining, shopping, transportation, and housing.

As in the focus groups, participants articulated a tension between student/non-student amenities and relationships between students and residents in general. Some residents felt that the future College Park should cater less to students and focus more on residents and home owners, while others stressed the importance of unifying students and resident interests through housing cooperatives, volunteer projects, and other programs.

## **Conclusion**

College Park is a community set apart from many others in the region. The community is young, diverse, and well-educated, and its residents take pride in the neighborliness and friendliness of the people around them. In the wake of increased redevelopment and demographic shifts, the community is faced with many challenges and opportunities for the future.

Developing a unified, long-range vision for the future of College Park will facilitate the community working together to face these challenges and seize the opportunities that will allow College Park to be a community of choice for many years to come.