

Commuting, Telecommuting and Place: Insights from two Maryland towns

InPlace Case Study Final Report

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Executive Summary

Background and Methodology

The InPlace project is a joint research project between the National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG) at the University of Maryland and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), located on the Island of Ireland (Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland). The goals of the project are to understand how commuting affects places, and how the COVID-19 pandemic may have altered this relationship (such as through increased telecommuting). This report focuses on the results of research conducted in Maryland by NCSG. NCSG selected two Maryland towns with less than 5,000 residents each and high levels of long-distance (45+ minute) commuting as case study locations for the project. An online survey was administered in both towns using convenience sampling, and in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted. Results were categorized into four thematic categories and are summarized below. Each result summary is accompanied by a section number where more details and discussion can be found.

Key Findings

Theme 1: Telecommuting Trends

- 1.1 Telecommuting increased significantly from pre-COVID levels
- 1.2 Attitudes about telecommuting were positive
- 1.3 Respondent felt that their employers were supportive of telecommuting
- 1.4 There may be a weak positive relationship between education level and the ability to telecommute
- 1.5 There may be a weak relationship between housing ownership status and ability to telecommute

Theme 2: Commuting, Community Health and Participation

- 2.1 There was no relationship found between volunteering and commute duration
- 2.2 There was no relationship found between social activities and commute duration
- 2.3 There may be a weak inverse relationship between exercise frequency and commute duration
- 2.4 Those who commuted longer reported more difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities

Theme 3: Telecommuting and Perceptions of Place

3.1 There was no relationship found between feelings about the natural environment and ability to telecommute

3.2 There may be a weak positive relationship in North Beach between perceptions of walkability/bikeability and the ability to telecommute during the pandemic.

3.3 Those who were able to telecommute during the pandemic rated North Beach higher on "social contact/interaction."

3.4 In North Beach, there was a nearly significant positive relationship between satisfaction with locality and ability to telecommute during the pandemic.

3.5 There was no significant relationship between satisfaction with one's community/the people who live there and ability to telecommute during the pandemic

Theme 4: Demographic Change and Demographic Divides

4.1 There was a near-significant inverse relationship between length of time a respondent had lived in each town and education level

- 4.2 In North Beach, newer residents tended to have longer commutes4.3 In Middletown, newer residents had a significantly higher chance of having been able to telecommute during the pandemic
- 4.4 In Middletown, newer residents were younger than longer-term residents

Key Takeaways

Based on this study and the existing literature, it is possible to imagine that we are entering a new era with less frequent commuting, but not necessarily less driving, where a select group of people spend more time in their towns and value place-based characteristics such as walkability and social interaction. Meanwhile, if current trends continue, the majority of workers will continue to commute in the traditional manner and require services such as public transportation. Because of equity gaps in telecommuting and car ownership, any decrease in public transportation quality or frequency resulting from decreased demand due to telecommuting may exacerbate existing racial and class differences. Policymakers should continue to plan for the public transportation needs of these groups while also taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the telecommuting boom, such as opportunities to invest in walkability and local businesses which could serve telecommuters.

Introduction

The InPlace project is a joint research project between the National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG) at the University of Maryland and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD), located on the Island of Ireland (Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland). The goals of the project are to understand how commuting affects places, and how the COVID-19 pandemic may have altered this relationship (such as through increased telecommuting).

Following a model set by ICLRD, NCSG adopted a case study approach involving an online survey and qualitative interviews. NCSG produced a literature review entitled "The effects of commuting on individuals and communities: a brief overview of the literature" that highlights the kinds of relationships that could be expected based on current research (see Appendix C). These expectations, as well as emerging trends from the survey and the interviews, informed the hypotheses that were tested in the results section.

This report focuses on the results of research conducted in Maryland by NCSG and does not include ICLRD data from Ireland.

Case Study Selection

When selecting our case study sites, we attempted to select locations comparable to those used by ICLRD for Phase 1 of their research. NCSG selected two Maryland towns with less than 5,000 residents each and high levels of long-distance (45+ minute) commuting as case study locations for the project. These towns were not chosen randomly, as numerous other small municipalities in Maryland meet this criteria. We chose towns that are on the fringes of Central Maryland, but still within the DC and Baltimore Metropolitan area. Further, NCSG chose towns where contacts were easily established through extant relationships with town employees and UMD's Environmental Finance Center.

Description of Case Study Locations

NCSG selected Middletown in Frederick County (population 4,943; 2020 US Census) and North Beach in Calvert County (population 2,146; 2020 US Census) as case study locations. Both North Beach and Middletown also have high levels of long-distance commuting as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Using 2019 ACS data, this map shows the percent of employed residents (age 16 and older who did not work from home) who traveled 45 minutes or more to work, organized by census tract. The percentages for residents within the municipal boundaries of North Beach and Middletown are also given in the popouts.

The above figure shows that North Beach and Middletown are either within or on the edge of a belt of long-commute census tracts that surround Washington, DC and Baltimore. North Beach has a higher percentage of long-distance (45+ minutes) commuters than does Middletown. This is likely due to its proximity to Washington, DC.

Methodology

The study used two primary methods for collecting data from residents and stakeholders within the case study towns: an online survey and qualitative interviews.

Survey

The survey was conducted May-June 2022 and consisted of 116 questions. Some questions were dependent on previous answers, and thus not all questions were shown to all respondents. The survey questions are shown in Appendix A. The time to respond to the survey was estimated to be 15-20 minutes. The survey was distributed through town email lists, flyers posted at local businesses and government or civic centers, and through targeted Facebook advertising. The survey was advertised with a \$100 raffle prize. The resulting sample is a convenience sample and is not truly random for purposes of statistical analysis. In other words, bias could have been introduced into the sample because our advertisements only reached those who use Facebook, subscribe to town email lists, frequent the places where the flyers were posted, or for other reasons. Constraints of time and resources, as well as an attempt to align our methodology with our partners at ICLRD, prevented us from seeking a truly random sample. However, observing the sample characteristics can provide some insight into the results.

Characteristic	InPlace Survey	2020 Census/ACS
Gender = Female:	64%	53%
Gender = Male	33%	47%
Gender = Other	3%	N/A
Race = White	92%	91%*
Race = Black or African American	1%	4%*
Race = Other	7%	6%*
Age = 65+	19%	15%

Table 1. Middletown Survey Sample Characteristics

*Those listing multiple races on the census were excluded for comparability. Our survey only allowed respondents to choose one race.

Characteristic	InPlace Survey	2020 Census/ACS
Gender = Female	67%	56%
Gender = Male	33%	44%
Gender = Other	0%	N/A
Race = White	90%	81%*
Race = Black or African American	1%	15%*
Race = Other	9%	5%*
Age = 65+	37%	13%

Table 2. North Beach Survey Sample Characteristics

*Those listing multiple races on the census were excluded for comparability. Our survey only allowed respondents to choose one race.

Both of our case study locations over-sampled females and under-sampled those identifying as Black or African American. In North Beach, the under-sampling of those identifying as Black or African American was particularly significant. It appears that our sampling methods nearly completely missed this group, which makes up 15% of the population of North Beach. In North Beach, but not in Middletown, we notably over-sampled those who are age 65 or older.

Both surveys received 101 responses. This means that, using 2020 Census numbers, we sampled about 5% of the population in North Beach, and about 2% of the population in Middletown. When interpreting our results, the groups that were under-sampled should be taken into account. Unfortunately, our sample size was too small to statistically correct for these sampling limitations.

Interviews

A total of 20 qualitative interviews were conducted (9 in Middletown, 11 in North Beach). Interviews were not intended to be representative but were rather intended to provide more in-depth discussion and insight into issues surrounding commuting and the life of the towns. Interview candidates were mostly recruited by means of a survey question that asked respondents if they were willing to be interviewed (thus, they were self-referred). A few interview subjects, however, were deliberately recruited based on their ability to provide insight into government and planning processes.

Interviews typically lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. They were recorded, transcribed, and coded for key concepts relevant to the project. Names were removed to keep responses anonymous.

Findings

Findings from the survey and interviews were divided into four thematic groupings:

- 1. Telecommuting trends
- 2. Commuting, community health and participation
- 3. Telecommuting and perceptions of place
- 4. Demographic change and demographic divides

A note about references:

Survey questions are referred to with a letter Q followed by their respective survey question number. The full text of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Interview respondents are referred to by the letter S followed by their respective respondent number. More context surrounding the interview quotations cited can be found in Appendix B.

Theme 1: Telecommuting Trends

1.1 Telecommuting increased significantly from pre-COVID levels

Our findings confirm that telecommuting increased dramatically in both case study locations compared to pre-pandemic conditions. Interestingly, our survey sample in Middletown had a relatively high prepandemic telecommuting rate of 22% of all employed respondents (N=68). By the time of the survey in May-June 2022, it had risen to about 35% of employed respondents (N=69). North Beach rose from an initial rate of 10% to 36% of employed respondents by the time of the survey (N=60; Q55-Q56; Appendix A). For comparison, the 2021 American Community Survey 1-year estimates place the percent of employed people working from home in the State of Maryland at 24% and at 48% in Washington, DC (US Census Bureau, 2022). Thus, our results place the towns between the state average and the Washington, DC average, perhaps a mark of their position in the D.C. commuter belt. Similar results were found when employed respondents were asked about the number of days they commuted per week before the pandemic, during pandemic related restrictions, and currently (Q49-Q51). The results are shown in Figure 1.1a and 1.1b below. They show that the 5-day commute has seen a precipitous drop and had not substantially recovered by the time of the survey. There has also been a large, sustained increase in those commuting 0 days per week.





Figure 1.1a & 1.1b: (*a*) Commute days per week among Middletown respondents who were employed at the time of the survey. N=67. (*b*) Commute days per week among North Beach respondents who were employed at the time of the survey. N=58.

1.2 Attitudes about telecommuting were positive

Attitudes about remote working were also examined by the survey. In both towns, the telecommuting experience was viewed quite positively by those who were able to work remotely during the pandemic. Recent survey data by McKinsey shows that 65% of employed respondents nationwide say they would be willing to work from home full-time (McKinsey, 2022). Our results show a similar pattern that indicates that remote work is viewed positively.





Figure 1.2a & 1.2b: (*a*) Employed Middletown respondents who were able to work from home during the pandemic were asked to rate how much they like telework on a scale of 1-5, five being the highest. N=46. (*b*) Employed North Beach respondents who were able to work from home during the pandemic were asked to rate how much they like telework on a scale of 1-5, five being the highest. N=41.

1.3 Respondent felt that their employers were supportive of telecommuting

Respondents were also asked whether they felt that their employers were supportive of remote working. The results differed by town, but overall, respondents felt that their employers were supportive. Approximately 66% of respondents in Middletown felt that their employer was either very supportive or moderately supportive, and approximately 88% of those in North Beach said the same.





Figure 1.3a & 1.3b: (*a*) Employed Middletown residents (both those who were able and unable to telecommute) indicated how supportive they felt their employers are of "remote/at home working." N=53. (Q29, Q34). (*b*) Employed North Beach residents (both those who were able and unable to telecommute) indicated how supportive they felt their employers are of "remote/at home working." N=43. (Q29, Q34).

1.4 There may be a weak positive relationship between education level and the ability to telecommute

Within the North Beach sample, there is a very clear correlation between level of educational qualification and the ability to work from home most or all of the time during the pandemic. This relationship was found to be statistically significant. However, the relationship is less clear in Middletown.





What is your highest level of educational qualification?

Figure 1.4a & 1.4b: (*a*) In Middletown, there appears to be some relationship between educational qualification and the ability to telecommute during the pandemic among employed residents. However, Fisher's Exact Test did not reveal a statistically significant variation from expected values (p=0.1718). (*b*) In North Beach, the ability to telecommute during the pandemic among employed residents appears to increase with educational qualification. Using Fisher's Exact Test, it was confirmed that the contingency table differed from expected values (p=0.0228). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

1.5 There may be a weak relationship between housing ownership status and ability to telecommute

Housing ownership status could be a proxy for socioeconomic variables (such as income) not captured by the survey. There appears to be a relationship, but due to the limitations of the sample size, it was

not statistically significant. In general, it appears that renters had a lower probability of being able to work from home most or all of the time during the pandemic.



Middletown: "Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?" by "Which of the following best describes your accommodation?" (Q23 vs Q72)

North Beach: "Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?" by "Which of the following best describes your accommodation?" (Q23 vs Q72





Figure 1.5a &1.5b: (*a*) It appears that there could be some relationship in Middletown between housing ownership status and ability to work from home among employed residents. However, Fisher's Exact Test did not reveal a statistically significant relationship (p= 0.7713). (*b*) It appears that there could be some relationship in North Beach between housing ownership status and ability to work from home among employed residents. However, the observed relationship was not statistically significant (Fisher's Exact Test, p = 0.7529). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

Which of the following best describes your accommodation?

Our results are consistent with national trends and also consistent with our hypothesis that the two towns, due to their proximity to the Washington, DC metro area and their high incidence of commuting, would have higher levels of telecommuting than the state average. Consistent with national trends, telecommuting was viewed positively. There is also some evidence that socioeconomic factors are mediating the ability to telecommute, especially in North Beach, where higher education levels meant a higher probability of being able to telecommute.

Interview respondents expressed their attitudes towards telecommuting in various ways. As indicated by the survey, most of these attitudes were positive. "My employer is offering full time telework as an option," one North Beach resident said. "So, hell yeah, I'll go back once a month, just to remind people what I look like, and that's about it" (S1). One Middletown resident said that she had "made the decision that I will never go back into the office. This job will stay remote. And if it didn't, I would find another remote position" (S69). A North Beach resident who has a hybrid schedule that requires commuting to Washington, DC also expressed his desire for more telework: "I don't think I need to be going into the office now for three days a week and sit in a cubicle. I mean, I was getting more work done at home not having to commute" (S43).

A few residents expressed concerns over loss of social contact in the work setting, but this was tempered by other positive aspects of telework: "I love working remote. I do," a North Beach resident said. "Everybody has people that you're perfectly fine not seeing every day. My best friend works there. So that was a little difficult, but I've gotten used to it...and I honestly feel like I work harder from home" (S10). Overall, the interviews contained 17 positive references to telecommuting and seven negative references. Some of the negative references were from respondents who felt positive about telecommuting overall.

Theme 2: Commuting, Community Health and Participation

The literature review (Appendix C) suggested that there are correlations between commute duration and the social and physical health of the community. Some of these hypotheses are discussed below. As telecommuting effectively means eliminating commuting, these results also have bearing on telecommuting.

2.1 There was no relationship found between volunteering and commute duration

Although the literature review (Appendix C) indicated that there would likely be a relationship between commute duration and frequency of volunteering, we did not find any significant or noteworthy correspondence in our samples. It is possible that controlling for socioeconomic variables separately would reveal the expected correlation, but our survey sample was not large enough to provide this control.

2.2 There was no relationship found between social activities and commute duration

Again, contrary to our expectations from the literature review (Appendix C), we did not see a significant or noteworthy correspondence between commute duration and participation in the social activities of a club, society or association. In order to find the results that were expected from the literature review, it is possible a larger sample size that could control for socioeconomic variables would be required.

2.3 There may be a weak inverse relationship between exercise frequency and commute duration

There appears to be an inverse relationship between longer commute times and taking part in sports or physical exercise every day or almost every day. Although the results are not statistically significant (p=0.18 for Middletown and p=0.14 for North Beach), both towns show a similarity in pattern that suggests that a larger sample size might reveal a significant association.





Figure 2.3a & 2.3b: (*a*) As commute time increases, the probability of Middletown respondents taking part in sports or physical exercise every day or almost every day decreases. However, the relationship was not statistically significant (p = 0.1746, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. (*b*) As commute time increases, the probability of North Beach respondents taking part in sports or physical exercise every day or almost every day decreases. This relationship, however, was not statistically significant (p = 0.1383, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. (*b*) as commute time increases, the probability of North Beach respondents taking part in sports or physical exercise every day or almost every day decreases. This relationship, however, was not statistically significant (p = 0.1383, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

2.4 Those who commuted longer reported more difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities

The results in both towns exhibited a very significant relationship between commute duration and reporting "difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities" at least once a month due to commuting.







Figure 2.4a & 2.4b: (*a*) The probability among Middletown respondents of reporting difficulty at least once a month fulfilling family responsibilities because of commuting increases with commute duration. The relationship is significant (p = 0.0001, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. (*b*) The probability among North Beach respondents of reporting difficulty at least once a month fulfilling family responsibilities because of commuting increases with commute duration. The relationship is significant (p=0.0001, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. (*b*) The probabilities because of commuting increases with commute duration. This relationship is significant (p=0.0001, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

The relationship was also significant in both towns for those reporting difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities at least once a month due to the amount of time they spent at work:







Figure 2.4c & 2.4d: (a) The probability among Middletown respondents of reporting difficulty at least once a month fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work increases with commute duration. The relationship is significant (p= 0.0072, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. (b) The probability among North Beach residents of reporting difficulty at least once a month fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent at work increases with commute duration. The relationship is significant (p = 0.0474, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

However, for "coming home too tired to do household chores" at least once a month, the relationships were not significant:



need to be done" at least monthly by "What is the current duration of your commute (one-way, in minutes)?" (Q10a vs Q59)





Figure 2.4e & 2.4f: (*a*) The probability among Middletown respondents of coming home from work too tired to do household jobs increases with commute duration. However, the relationship was not statistically significant (p = 0.1265, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. (*b*) The probability among North Beach respondents of coming home from work too tired to do household jobs increases with commute duration. However, the relationship was not statistically significant (p = 0.02669, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. (*b*) The probability among North Beach respondents of coming home from work too tired to do household jobs increases with commute duration. However, the relationship was not statistically significant (p = 0.0669, Chi square). The y values of the points are randomly determined. For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

2.5 Summary of Results from Theme 2:

We did not find empirical evidence to support some of the social effect theories that we expected to find from the literature review (Appendix C), such as those of Putnam (2000) that indicate that social participation would decrease as commute time increased. With a larger sample, we would have been able to control for socioeconomic variables and perhaps would have seen a significant correlation. Nonetheless, a few residents in the interviews did mention negative social effects of commuting. As one North Beach resident said, social relationships are difficult because "people aren't home" (S39). A Middletown resident who used to commute 1.5 hours each way said that "if you wanted to do community type stuff, if you wanted to be involved with the Planning Commission, or you wanted to be, you know, coach your kid in sports, and so you were practicing during the week, for me to be home by six o'clock, was tough" (S8). However, he felt that jobs have recently become more flexible to allow workers to leave early to participate in scheduled events.

We did, however, find strong evidence of commute duration's effect on reported difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities. The four analyses (two for each town) measuring this variable were statistically significant. As commute time increased, higher percentages of respondents reported difficulty "fulfilling family responsibilities" at least once a month. This may relate to some findings of the literature review, such as that commuting is associated with increased strain (Clark et al, 2020) and with decreased leisure time satisfaction (Clark et al., 2020; Dickerson et al., 2014). Further, there is a possible pattern in our data between exercise frequency and commute duration. This is consistent with our expectations from the literature review (see Hoehner et al., 2019; Raza et al., 2021).

Theme 3: Telecommuting and perceptions of place

One of the aims of the study was to examine how commuting and telecommuting may be affecting the relationship between people and place. In this section, we examined several possible correlations between telecommuting and perceptions of place. It is possible that spending more time at home changes the way residents perceive or value their environment. This was examined using several measures.

3.1 There was no relationship found between feelings about the natural environment and ability to telecommute

There were no significant relationships between commute duration or commute days per week and the score residents gave the natural environment in their towns (Q3e).

3.2 There may be a weak relationship in North Beach between perceptions of walkability/bikeabililty and the ability to telecommute during the pandemic.

There is a visually compelling, but not quite significant, relationship between ability to telecommute during the pandemic and scores respondents in North Beach gave the place characteristic "moving around (on foot/bike)." Those who were able to telecommute gave this place characteristic a higher score. In Middletown, this relationship is not as clear. In the semi-structured interviews, all ten North Beach respondents spoke positively and without prompting about walkability in the town. In Middletown, only 6 of the 9 respondents spoke positively about walkability, and two residents did not mention it at all. It is possible that residents in North Beach who telecommuted during the pandemic developed a different relationship with the town and its walkable features because of the time they were spending at home. This new relationship may be manifesting in the higher scores these residents gave to "moving around (on foot/bike)."

One North Beach resident who telecommutes explained how walkability was an important consideration in choosing their home: "When we bought this house – we knew it was going to be North Beach if we could, and one other criteria, the top one probably was that we had to be able to walk to the boardwalk and all the stuff down there. And we did, we can, it's only a five minute walk maybe" (S10). Another North Beach telecommuter brought up safety and having destinations to walk to: "One thing I like is that there's a stop sign at every intersection off of Chesapeake Avenue. A four way stop. So, you know, it feels like for the most part, you're safe around the car traffic. Yeah, and there's actually stuff to walk to. Like, my wife and I will walk down to where the post office is, which is about 10 blocks or something, like where the coffee shop is, and, you know there's-- it's walkable and there's things to walk to" (S1).



Middletown: Score for "Moving Around (on foot / bike)" by "Were you able to work

Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?



Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?

Figure 3.2a & 3.2b: (a) There is no apparent relationship between scores employed Middletown residents gave for "Moving around (on foot / bike)" and ability to telecommute during the pandemic (p = 0.8467, Fisher's Exact Test). (b) There is an apparent relationship between scores employed North Beach residents gave for "Moving around (on foot/bike)" and ability to telecommute during the pandemic. However, Fisher's Exact Test indicated that the relationship between the variables was not significant (p = 0.1673). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

3.3 Those who were able to telecommute during the pandemic rated North Beach higher on "social contact/interaction."

Following in the same pattern as section 3.2, there appears to be a positive relationship (this time significant) between scores North Beach respondents gave for social contact/interaction and their ability to telecommute during the pandemic. Those who were able to telecommute most or all of the time gave this place characteristic a higher rating. This does not seem to be the case for Middletown. As in section 3.2, it is possible that North Beach residents gained an increased appreciation through telecommuting for the opportunities for social contact provided by the town.



Middletown: Score for "Social Contact / Interaction" by "Were you able to work from

Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?



North Beach: Score for "Social Contact / Interaction" by "Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?" (Q3j vs Q23)

Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?

Figure 3.3a & 3.3b: (a) There is no apparent relationship between scores employed Middletown residents gave for "Social contact / interaction" and ability to telecommute during the pandemic (p = 0.7499, Fisher's Exact Test). (b) In North Beach, there is a significant relationship between scores employed residents gave for "social contact/interaction" and ability to telecommute during the pandemic (p = 0.0406, Fisher's Exact Test). This

relationship appears to be positive (those who did more telework gave higher scores). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

3.4 In North Beach, there was a nearly significant positive relationship between satisfaction with locality and ability to telecommute during the pandemic.

Consistent with the pattern described in 3.3 and 3.2, it appears that North Beach residents who were able to telecommute were more satisfied with their locality than those who were not able to telecommute. The relationship between the variables is not quite significant (p=0.07, Fisher's Exact Test). Still, it is interesting that North Beach again shows this pattern, but Middletown does not.



Middletown: Score for "My locality / where I live" by "Were you able to work from

Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?



North Beach: Score for "My locality / where I live" by "Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?" (Q9f vs Q23)

Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?

Figure 3.4a & 3.4b: (*a*) There does not appear to be a relationship between ability to telecommute during the pandemic and scores employed Middletown residents gave for "My locality / where I live" (p = 0.2612, Fisher's Exact Test). (*b*) Employed North Beach residents in our sample who were able to telecommute most or all of the time during the pandemic appeared to give higher scores for "My locality / where I live." However, there was not a significant relationship between the variables (p = 0.0725, Fisher's Exact Test). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

Further, North Beach has a significant relationship (p=0.03, Fisher's Exact Test) between continuing to telecommute after the pandemic restrictions and satisfaction with locality. The relationship appears to be positive. This is another indication that the more people telecommute in North Beach, the more satisfied they are with the community.



Figure 3.4c. Out of those employed North Beach residents who were able to telecommute during the pandemic, those who are still working remotely were more likely to rate their locality 10/10. There is a significant relationship between the variables (p = 0.0296, Fisher's Exact Test). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

3.5 There was no significant relationship between satisfaction with one's community/the people who live there and ability to telecommute during the pandemic

Although North Beach appears to display a relationship between these variables, it is not at all significant (p=0.56, Fisher's Exact Test). Middletown does not appear to have as clear of a relationship.



Middletown: Score for "My community / the people who live there" vs. "Were you

Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?





Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?

Figure 3.5a & 3.5b: (a) There does not appear to be a relationship between scores employed Middletown residents gave for "My community / the people who live there" and ability to telecommute during the pandemic (p = 0.5388, Fisher's Exact Test). (b) Although there appears to be some relationship between scores North Beach residents gave for "My community / the people who live there" and ability to telecommute during the pandemic, the observed relationship was not significant (p = 0.5564, Fisher's Exact Test). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

3.6 Summary and Discussion of Theme 3

North Beach displays an interesting relationship between telecommuting and opinions about the town. It appears that those who were able to telecommute during the pandemic had a higher opinion of "moving around on foot/bike," "social contact/interaction," and overall satisfaction with the locality. This was not true of Middletown.

It is possible that North Beach provided greater satisfaction to telecommuters who spent their working days at home than Middletown did. Because they spent more time engaging with attributes of the town due to telecommuting, they may have rated them higher. For example, about 73% of total respondents in North Beach rated "getting around on foot/bike" either 7/7 or 6/7. In Middletown, only about 39% of respondents gave their town the same rating. Even among those who could not telecommute, nearly double the percent of respondents in North Beach rated their town 7/7 on this characteristic as respondents from Middletown. One respondent from the interviews noted that in Middletown, "unless you live in downtown," driving is required (S44). In contrast, one North Beach resident noted that "[the town] is the size of a one cent stamp. You can be anywhere in five minutes on foot, more or less" (S1).

North Beach may also have a more attractive local restaurant scene. Nine of eleven interview respondents spoke positively of local restaurants, while only 5 of 9 did in Middletown. Several North Beach residents noted with satisfaction that they can walk to restaurants that they enjoy. "I like Hook and Vine, I love Vaughan Cheese," one resident said. "Yeah, I mean, I can walk to these places.. And all of these places are just two, three blocks away from me. And that's wonderful" (S23).

Towns that provide the types of amenities that telecommuters are looking for, such as walkability, social interaction, or an attractive local business scene may be more likely to foster relationships between people and place.

Theme 4: Demographic Change and Demographic Divides

Anecdotal evidence from the interviews in both towns suggests that a demographic change may be taking place. Half (10 out of 20) of the interviewees in the project mentioned a difference between long-term residents and newcomers (5 of 9 in Middletown and 5 of 11 in North Beach). The character of the towns may be changing due to new residents who are moving outward from the core of the Washington and Baltimore regions. As one Middletown resident put it: "All of these people are coming from Montgomery [County]-- I mean, literally everyone I meet is from Montgomery County, like I haven't met anyone that's actually from Frederick [County]" (S21). A North Beach resident expressed a similar sense that "the town seems to have gotten attractive and has attracted more out-of-towners and more younger people" (S1). This section examines possible relationships between the length of time residents have lived in each town and various factors.

4.1 There was a near-significant inverse relationship between length of time a respondent had lived in each town and education level

Our results indicate that newcomers may be more highly educated than long-term residents. Both towns show nearly significant inverse relationships between years lived in the community and education level (p=0.10 in Middletown and p=0.10 in North Beach on Fisher's Exact Test). Several respondents to the interviews mentioned income or education differences between longtime residents and newcomers. Our survey did not measure income directly, so education is a possible proxy. As one Middletown resident put it, "people who are from here who probably had like two or three generations back, they remember Middletown being this like little farm town, and they don't like those high [sic] educated professionals with a lot of money buying property because they don't contribute to the community" (S61).



Middletown: "If you live in Middletown, how many years have you lived in the local community?" by "What is your highest level of educational qualification?" (Q64 vs. Q73)

What is your highest level of educational qualification?



North Beach: "If you live in North Beach, how many years have you lived in the local

What is your highest level of educational qualification?

Figure 4.1a & 4.1b: (a) There is a nearly significant relationship between level of educational qualification and length of residence in Middletown (p = 0.0979, Fisher's Exact Test). The relationship appears to be an inverse relationship, except in the case of those holding a high school diploma or GED. (b) There is a nearly significant relationship between level of educational qualification and length of residence in North Beach (p = 0.1015, Fisher's Exact Test). The relationship appears to be an inverse relationship, except in the case of those holding a high school diploma or GED. For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

4.2 In North Beach, newer residents tended to have longer commutes

In North Beach, but not in Middletown, the newest residents had longer average commutes. This would be consistent with the hypothesis that Washington, DC or Baltimore commuters are moving into the area. There may be a reason that this appears to be more true of North Beach than of Middletown. In our early analysis of the towns, we found that Middletown was located on the outer edge of the commuter belt defined by the prevalence of 45 minute commutes, while North Beach was within it (see Figure 1). It is possible that the increased distance commuters must travel to Middletown makes it less attractive as a destination for commuters. Further, the group with the highest mean commute time in North Beach had lived there less than one year. Because of the timing of our survey, this means that this group moved to North Beach after the start of the pandemic. It is possible we are observing outmigration to this relatively rural area as a result of the pandemic.



North Beach, employed residents: Mean of "What is the current duration of your commute (one way, in minutes)?" vs. "If you live in North Beach, how many years have you lived in the local community?" (Mean of Q59 vs. Q64)



Figure 4.2a & 4.2b: (*a*) The mean commute duration among employed residents varies with length of residence in Middletown, but the relationship is not clear. (*b*) The mean commute duration among employed residents appears to trend downward as length of residence in North Beach increases except for among those who have lived in the town 20+ years.

4.3 In Middletown, newer residents had a significantly higher chance of having been able to telecommute during the pandemic

In Middletown, but not in North Beach, there is a statistically significant relationship (p=0.03) between length of residence and ability to telecommute during the pandemic. North Beach also shows a less pronounced but similar pattern that is not statistically significant. Perhaps these results provide

evidence of a socioeconomic difference among "newcomers" who hold white collar jobs with telecommuting flexibility.



Figure 4.3a & 4.3b: (*a*) There is a significant relationship between years lived in Middletown and ability to telecommute during the pandemic (p = 0.0278, Fisher's Exact Test). The relationship appears to be an inverse relationship. (*b*) In North Beach, the relationship between years lived in the community and the ability to telecommute during the pandemic is not significant (p = 0.7832, Fisher's Exact Test). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

4.4 In Middletown, newer residents were younger than longer-term residents

In Middletown, about half of the respondents who had lived in the town 10 years or less were under age 44. The relationship between age and length of residence is statistically significant (p=0.0002). In North Beach, over 70% of respondents who had lived in the town less than 10 years were age 45 or older, including about 25% who were 65 or older. This relationship, however, was not statistically significant (p=0.25). Still, there is some evidence to suggest that in Middletown, "newcomers" are relatively young, while in North Beach, they are relatively older.



North Beach: Age Cohort by "If you live in North Beach, how many years have you lived in the local community?" (Q68 vs. Q64)



Figure 4.4a 4.4b: (*a*) In Middletown, there is a significant relationship between length of residence and the age cohort of the respondent (p = 0.0002, Fisher's Exact Test). (*b*) In North Beach, the relationship between length of residence in the community and the age cohort of the respondent is not significant (p = 0.2528, Fisher's Exact Test). For instructions about reading this figure, see Endnote I.

4.5 Summary and Discussion of Theme 4

In both towns, newcomers appear to be better educated, more able to telecommute, and younger than those who have lived in the town 11 years or more. In North Beach, newcomers appear to have longer commutes than longer-term residents.

Several interview respondents from North Beach described how the town is gentrifying from a bluecollar town with small houses to a wealthier town with larger houses and more expensive cars (S39, S23, S43, S99). One newer resident, however, felt that the pace of change was not fast enough (S73).

In Middletown, a few respondents reported that they had heard or read concerns from long-term residents about development or about becoming "Montgomery 2.0" (S21, S44). However, these

respondents did not class themselves in this group. The one long-term resident in our interview sample who did express such concerns felt that "[the residents'] right to live in a small town is being taken away without our consent" (S69). She explained that new residents often don't understand that adding new businesses would change the character of the town. One newer resident and one long-term resident, however, felt that newcomers were adding beneficial diversity to the town (S21, S38).

Overall, both towns seem to be experiencing demographic change.

Conclusion

National trends of increased telecommuting are holding in the small Maryland towns we studied in the Washington, DC and Baltimore commuter belt. Our case study towns have more telecommuting than the state average, but less than the Washington, DC average. The increase in telecommuting could mean a decreased need for commuter-focused public transit within the commuter belt. However, the literature review (Appendix C) makes it clear that decreased commuting does not always lead to decreased vehicle miles traveled (Chakrabarti, 2018). Some residents may travel more to other activities due to the decreased time they spend commuting.

Because the study was conducted more than two years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (May-June 2022), it seems likely that the changes in telecommuting levels that were observed will persist into the future. Residents also viewed telecommuting positively, and felt that their employers were supportive of telecommuting. Both of these findings support the hypothesis that high levels of telecommuting will persist into the future.

There are also concerns about equity that arise with telecommuting. Our study found a statistically significant relationship between educational qualification and ability to telecommute in North Beach and a weaker relationship in Middletown. There was also a possible relationship between ability to telecommute and homeownership/renter status, but it was not statistically significant. With a larger sample size, these relationships may have been statistically significant. Also, because our survey dramatically under-sampled Black or African American residents, particularly in North Beach, there could be additional equity concerns about access to telecommuting that we were unable to observe.

Telecommuting may also be having an effect on how residents interact with and view the places they live. In North Beach, we found evidence that this is occurring. There was a significant positive relationship between the ability to telecommute during the pandemic and surveyed perceptions of "social contact/interaction." This seems to indicate that those who are telecommuting view their community as more socially satisfying. There was also an apparent but non-significant relationship between the ability to telecommute during the pandemic and scores residents gave North Beach on the metric "moving around on foot/bike," indicating that telecommuters found their community more friendly to non-motorized transit. Perhaps those staying home to work appreciated these mobility aspects more as they had increased opportunity to use them. It is uncertain why these results were not found in Middletown. Our results indicate that different towns may respond to increased levels of telecommuting differently.

Our results also documented some effects of traditional commuting on the case study towns. Contrary to what we expected from the literature review (Appendix C), we did not find evidence for a relationship between commute duration and measures of social participation. We did, however, find a possible relationship between exercise frequency and commute duration, but only when the frequency of exercise was dichotomized as as "every day or almost every day" and "other." It seems likely that with a larger sample size, this relationship would have reached statistical significance. Both towns exhibited a very similar trend.

There were also significant relationships between reported commute duration and reported difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities at least once a month. The relationship was not significant,

however, for reporting coming home "too tired to do some of the household jobs which need to be done." Overall, it is clear that subjectively, residents with longer commute durations feel that they have more difficulty completing some non-work tasks on at least a monthly basis than other residents.

Finally, we examined evidence of demographic changes taking place in the towns which could be occurring due to their position in the commuter belt. In Middletown, those who had lived in the town 10 years or less had a significantly higher chance of having been able to telecommute during the pandemic. This indicates that newer residents have different education levels or employment characteristics more favorable to telecommuting. Both towns had a nearly significant and positive relationship between living in the town 10 years or less vs 11+ years and education level, which supports this conclusion. In North Beach, newer residents also seem to have longer average commutes, providing evidence that more long-distance commuters are moving to North Beach in recent years. In fact, the group with the longest average commute times moved to North Beach within the past year (N=5), which could indicate pandemic-related change.

In a post-pandemic world where nearly a third of workers commute from home, how will the life of small towns in the commuter belt be different? What aspects of quality of life will be most salient? How will public transit need to adapt? Based on this study and the existing literature, it is possible to imagine that we are entering a new era with less frequent commuting, but not necessarily less driving, where a select group of people spend more time in their towns and value place-based characteristics such as walkability and social interaction. Meanwhile, if current trends continue, the majority of workers will continue to commute in the traditional manner and require services such as public transportation. Because of equity gaps in telecommuting and car ownership, any decrease in public transportation quality or frequency resulting from decreased demand due to telecommuting may exacerbate existing racial and class differences. Policymakers should continue to plan for the public transportation needs of these groups while also taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the telecommuting boom, such as opportunities to invest in walkability and local businesses which could serve telecommuters.ⁱ

ⁱ <u>A note about figures:</u>

Sections 1.4-1.5, 3.2-3.5, 4.1, 4.3-4.4: These figures are "mosaic plots." The labels on the x axis are comprised of responses to the survey question printed below these labels. The width of each column is defined by the share of respondents who chose that particular response for the x-axis survey question. The height of the stacked rectangles within each column represents the share of respondents *within that x axis response category* who chose a given response on the y-axis survey question. The available responses for the y-axis question are labeled by color coding and are given in the legend on the top right of the figure.

Section 2.3 & 2.4: The figures in sections 2.3 and 2.4 are logistic probability plots. The plotted lines represent the probability of meeting a given condition for each value of x. The plotted points are randomly "jittered" on the y axis and their y values have no meaning. However, the number of points at any given value of x is meaningful in that it shows the density of the data points that were used to shape the probability model at any given value of x.
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Appendix A: Survey questions

1. [Consent for survey]

2. [Raffle entry]

3. Using the following scale (1 to 7), where 1 is the lowest score and 7 is the best / highest score, how would you rate this community on each of the following? Please select a score on each line.

3a. Moving Around (on foot / bike)

3b. Public Transportation

3c. Traffic and Parking

3d. Streets and Public Spaces

3e. The Natural Environment

3f. Play and Recreation

3g. Facilities and Amenities

3h. Work and Local Economy

3i. Housing

3j. Social Contact/Interaction

3k. Sense of Community

3I. Feeling Safe

3m. Care and Maintenance

3n. Community Engagement/Participation

4. Over the past 5 YEARS, have these aspects of the community gotten better or worse, or have they stayed the same?

4a. Moving Around (on foot / bike)

4b. Public Transportation

4c. Traffic and Parking

4d. Streets and Public Spaces

4e. The Natural Environment

4f. Play and Recreation

4g. Facilities and Amenities

4h. Work and Local Economy

4i. Housing

4j. Social Contact/Interaction

4k. Sense of Community

4l. Feeling Safe

4m. Care and Maintenance

4n. Community Engagement/Participation

5. Please comment on any of your answers above

6. What are the community's main assets or strengths?

7. What are the challenges in terms of the community's development?

8. What three words would you use to describe [town name]?

9. Quality of Life and Well-Being: Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 how satisfied you are with each of the following items, where 1 means you are very dissatisfied and 10 means you are very satisfied

9a. My current main job (if applicable)

9b. My commute to work (if applicable)

9c. My standard of living

9d. My accommodation/housing

9e. My family life

9f. My locality/where I live

9g. My community / the people who live there

10. How often has each of the following happened to you during the last 12 months?

10a. I have come home from work too tired to do some of the household jobs which need to be done.

10b. It has been difficult for me to fulfill my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spend at work.

10c. It has been difficult for me to fulfill my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spend commuting.

11. Now, thinking of your situation before the pandemic (prior to March 2020), how often did the following happen to you?

11a. I used to come home from work too tired to do some of the household jobs which need to be done. 11b. It used to be difficult for me to fulfill my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I was spending at work.

11c. It used to difficult for me to fulfill my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I was spending commuting.

Please comment on the above (optional):

12. How frequently do you do each of the following?

12a. Take part in sports or physical exercise

12b. Participate in social activities of a club, society, or an association

13. How often did you do unpaid voluntary work through any community-based or charitable

organizations in the last 12 months?

Please comment on the above (optional):

About your work

14. Are you in a paid job?

Employment

15. Are you an employee or self-employed?

16. In what city is your main place of work?

17. What kind of employment contract do you have in your main job?

18. Do you work in the ...?

19. What is your occupation in your main job?

20. How many hours do you normally work per week in your main job, including any paid or unpaid overtime?

21. If you could freely choose the number of your working hours while taking into account the need to earn your living, how many hours per week would you prefer to work at present? Working during the pandemic

22. Did you receive any of the pandemic-related business, employment or social welfare supports? (including "stimulus checks")

23. Were you able to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic?

Home-based/remote/at-home worker (experiences)

24. Are you still working from home/remotely?

- 25. If yes, what are the arrangements?
- 26. In what types of spaces have you worked over the past year?
- 27. Do you like working from home/remotely?
- 28. Can you see yourself continuing at home/remote working in the future?
- 29. How would you describe your employer's attitude to remote/at-home working?

- 30. How would you describe your home broadband / internet connectivity?
- 31. If you know it, what is your download speed?
- 32. How have your childcare arrangements been affected during the pandemic?

Home-based/remote/at-home worker (options and attitudes)

33. Would you like the option of working from home/remotely, at least part-time? Please rate on a scale from 1 to 5.

34. How would you describe your employer's attitude to remote/at-home working?

35. How would you describe your home broadband / internet connectivity?

36. If you know it, what is your download speed?

37. How have your childcare arrangements been affected during the pandemic? Please tick one of the following.

38. Home-based/remote/at - home worker (options and attitudes)

38a. Working from home / working remotely could be a gamechanger for small towns and rural Maryland

38b. People are more likely to move to small towns and rural areas if they know they can work from home/remotely.

38c. Working from home/remotely is only a temporary thing, and we will go back to commuting after the pandemic is over

Students

39. Are you a student?

40. Where do you attend school / college?

Caregiver/Parenting Duties

41. Do you have any caregiving/parenting duties or responsibilities?

42. On average, how many hours per week are you involved in any of the following activities outside of paid work?

42a. Caring for and/or educating your children / grandchildren

42b. Cooking and / or housework

42c. Caring for disabled or infirm family members, neighbors or friends

43. How easy or difficult is it to combine paid work with your care responsibilities?

Disability

44. Do you have a disability or long-term illness?

Work Options and Progression

45. Has your disability or long-term illness been a barrier to accessing employment?

46. Has the increase in at home / remote working provided you with any employment-related

opportunities, including career progression or additional hours?

47. Would the further development of home / remote working improve your career progression?

Commuting

48. On average, how many days per week do you work in paid employment or spend in full-time education?

49. On average, how many days per week did you commute pre-pandemic (i.e., before March 2020)?

50. On average, how many days per week did you commute during the pandemic-related restrictions? 51. On average, how many days per week do you currently commute?

51. On average, now many days per week do you currently commute:

52. Please indicate your main mode of travel to work, school or college pre-pandemic (i.e., before March 2020)

53. Please indicate your main mode of travel to work, school or college during the pandemic-related restrictions

54. Please indicate your main mode of travel to work, school or college currently

55. Place of work / study:

56. Place of work / study PRIOR to the pandemic (i.e., before March 2020):

57. What was the duration of your commute (one-way, in minutes) pre-pandemic (i.e., before March 2020)?

58. What was the duration of your commute (one-way, in minutes) during the pandemic-related restrictions?

59. What is the current duration of your commute (one-way, in minutes)?

60. Relative to before the pandemic (i.e., before March 2020), how is your current commute?

Impacts of longer commutes

61. How would you describe the impact of your longer commute on your quality of life? Please comment

Impacts of shorter / reduced commutes

62. How would you describe the impact of your shorter / reduced commute on your quality of life? Please comment

Where I live and work

63. Where is your principal primary residence i.e. where do you live most of the year?

64. If you live in North Beach, how many years have you lived in the local community?

65. If you moved into this community, what was the primary motivating factor?

66. Which of the following best describes the place where you do most of your work or study?

About me

- 67. About yourself: Gender
- 68. Age Cohort
- 69. In general, how is your health
- 70. Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?
- 71. Which of the following best describes your race?
- 72. Which of the following best describes your accommodation?
- 73. What is your highest level of educational qualification?
- 74. Other comments/observations/remarks

75. Would you be willing to participate in an interview or focus group to help us learn more about North Beach?

76. Contact Information for cash prize drawing, interviews and focus groups (optional)

Appendix B: Interview excerpts cited

Throughout the report, when individual interview respondents were referenced, they were cited in parentheses, e.g., "(S21)." Since these brief references could not always provide the entire context for the residents' comments, additional context is included below for each reference. The citations are organized by report section and provide basic demographics. Those who commuted 3 or more days per week were determined to be "commuters" even if they telecommuted at other times during the week. Those who did not work or who worked from home for themselves were labeled "non-commuters."

Section 1.6 Citations:

<u>S1 – North Beach, male, telecommuter:</u>

Well, before the pandemic, I was offered the option to telework 80%. Before that, and, you know, through, until the, until COVID hit when I would go in, I have to commute about 45 minutes each way. It's, it's kind of a straight shot, it's on this side of the metro area. So it doesn't really get into the urban area until, till I get close to work. So it, definitely a lot better than my old commute, which was, we were at the southern end of the same county. So it was just really, really long; so much more manageable commute. And now I don't commute at all, because, well, we've, we've, we've haven't been able to go back to the office. But also because of COVID, my employer is offering full time telework as an option. So, hell yeah, I'm not--I'll go back once a month, just to, you know, remind people what I look like, and that's about it.

S10 – North Beach, female, telecommuter:

I love working remote. I do. There's, you know, everybody has people that you're perfectly fine not seeing every day. You know, my best friend works there. So that was a little difficult, but I've gotten used to it. I have a great setup here at the house, solid Wi Fi. And I honestly feel like I work harder from home.

<u>S43 – North Beach, male, commuter:</u>

Absolutely. I don't think I need to be going into the office now for three days a week and sit in a cubicle. I mean, I was getting more work done at home not having to commute. Like my employees that I work with, that I'm kind of responsible for supervising, I could call them or text them at any time when they were working from home and the work was getting done. This whole opinion of people, you know, now, it's nice to see people, you know, but you know, I mean, I spend more time, you know, I mean, people, I'm talking to people in the office, you know, at their cubicle talking to them about different things, and it might not be work related most but, you know, many times, so, I could be at home working. So I think that the, the work product, and, you know, industry needs to recognize that if people have the ability to work from home, give it to them. There's just sitting in office cubicle farms is, it's just ineffective, and I think after the pandemic people or anybody that coughs or sneezes now, you know, is, you know, I mean, it's, it's, everyone's still in fear of what could happen with, you know, the ongoing pandemic, 'is this another variant?' You know, oh someone coughed over there on the other side of the cubicle, and do I need to be worried about that? I think it's just stupid that companies are like, pushing people back into the office for what, you know? They can save that money on rent.

<u>S69 – Middletown, female, telecommuter:</u>

Yes, I've made the decision that I will never go back into the office, I will, this job will stay remote. And if it didn't, I would find another remote position.

Section 2.5 Citations

<u>S8 – Middletown, male, town official:</u>

Well, for, I would, I would say that a lot of people, and I don't think it's quite as common anymore-- early stages, you had to really, you know, if you wanted to do community type stuff, if you wanted to be involved with the Planning Commission, or you wanted to be, you know, coach your-- your, your kid in, in sports, and so you were practicing during the week, for me to be home by six o'clock, was tough. I'd have to leave, I'd have to leave Bethesda probably in the 4:30 to get home by six, to make sure I can be home by six. Because you know, of course you'd have accidents and stuff like that. And then next thing you know, you're sitting in traffic for even longer than you thought you would. But I think that, that was- now it's probably not so much because I think people are a little more flexible in terms of how they work. Not necessarily just work from home, but I think-- I also officiate basketball, and I've got a lot of guys working different places. And they say, to get to the 5:30 game for the local high school, you know, they're leaving at three o'clock, because they work in Virginia or someplace like that. But there seems to be a lot more flexibility to do that. I guess probably if you make up your hours.

<u>S39 – North Beach, male, telecommuter:</u>

It's harder to, I mean, I don't know, though. I'm [inaudible]. Like for relationship building and stuff like that, it's difficult because people aren't home. It's hard to get to know more than one or two of your neighbors because you just don't--it's really sporadic when you see them or don't see them, which is, can be challenging. I think that's one of the highlights of the First Fridays because it draws so many people out, and you get to meet new people and kind of get a, get a mental picture of what the character of your community is.

Section 3.2 Citations

<u>S1 – North Beach, male, telecommuter:</u>

Definitely, I mean, it's, it's the size of a one cent stamp. So you know, you can be anywhere in five minutes on foot, more or less. The boardwalk is a nice draw. You know, there's a little park---they have a, one thing I like is that there's a stop sign at every intersection off of Chesapeake Avenue. A four way stop. So, you know, it feels like for the most part, it's, it, you're safe around the car traffic. Yeah, and there's actually stuff to walk to. Like, my wife and I will walk down to where the post office is, which is about 10 blocks or something, like where the coffee shop is, and, you know there's-- it's walkable and there's things to walk to. So yeah.

<u>S10 – North Beach, female, telecommuter:</u>

I love living in a small little beach town. And I really like the people here. It's a nice, nice mix of people, you know, young and old, everything in between. And I just like the feel; I love being near the water. When we bought this house -- we knew it was going to be North Beach if we could, and one other criteria, the top one probably was that we had to be able to walk to the boardwalk and all the stuff down there. And, and we did, we can it's only a five minute walk maybe. So I just really like it, like the small town, beach town feel. And that's probably the biggest draw for me. And my husband was like, "Yeah, whatever. I'll go." Happy wife happy life, you know?

Section 3.6 Citations

<u>S1 – North Beach, male, telecommuter:</u>

Definitely, I mean, it's, it's the size of a one cent stamp. So you know, you can be anywhere in five minutes on foot, more or less. The boardwalk is a nice draw. You know, there's a little park---they have a, one thing I like is that there's a stop sign at every intersection off of Chesapeake Avenue. A four way stop. So, you know, it feels like for the most part, it's, it, you're safe around the car traffic. Yeah, and there's actually stuff to walk to. Like, my wife and I will walk down to where the post office is, which is about 10 blocks or something, like where the coffee shop is, and, you know there's-- it's walkable and there's things to walk to. So yeah.

<u>S23 – North Beach, female, telecommuter:</u>

I used to eat at the Westlawn a lot. But now I won't be doing that. And I like Hook and Vine, I love Vaughan Cheese. Yeah, I mean, I can walk to these places. I live on [#]th Street. And all of these places are just two, three blocks away from me. And that's wonderful. You know, I don't have to drive around and park, you know, I just lock my door and walk down the street. I mean, you can't beat that.

<u>S44 – Middletown, female, non-commuter:</u>

From commuting? Oh, yeah. I mean, everyone's gone during the day. And well, there's still a lot of people here. But there's just so much driving. Yeah, everybody has to get in their car to go anywhere. You can't go anywhere in Middletown -- unless you live in downtown Middletown and want to walk around the town itself. You can't go, there's no shopping. You could, there's a couple of restaurants. And I do see people walking to and from some of the restaurants downtown. But once in a while, I'll see people walking up to Safeway, but even that's probably a mile from the closest houses. So, no one wants to carry their groceries that far.

Theme 4 Introduction Citations

<u>S1 – North Beach, male, telecommuter:</u>

Yeah. A couple of changes. I mean, it seems like now we have this town struggle to have viable businesses. And now we've got like, a few, like really decent restaurants and you know, some other kinds of shops that seem to be holding their own, that we didn't have before. And I noticed we've got a number of kind of like younger people, I want to say, maybe 20s but certainly 30s-- like people that, maybe because of the pandemic, but people that you know, just kind of wanted to get away from the

metro area maybe and thought that North Beach was like a nice, you know, a nice alternative. I'm speculating about their motives, but definitely noticed, including like with some people that I know who, who have moved here like, you know, suddenly, the town seems to have gotten attractive and has attracted more out-of-towners and more younger people, I think.

<u>S21 – Middletown, female, telecommuter:</u>

Yeah, I mean, I can definitely tell like the old timers in Frederick County don't like all the new growth that there has been. They're definitely, the people have been here for a lot of time, they don't like-- they think that it's turning into Montgomery 2.0. You know, because all of these people are coming from Montgomery-- I mean, literally everyone I meet is from Montgomery County, like I haven't met anyone that's actually from Frederick. Um, so it definitely has expanded quite a bit. And I'm guessing it's because the schools are good, and it's affordable. And if you only have to go in the office, like once a week, or never, like, why would you stay in Montgomery County, you know. What I'm finding interesting though, is now that we are living out here, we still find ourselves going back to DC, like the Metro, for like entertainment or restaurants. So I am curious how long this shift out to, like outward will stick because I think people who like came from those areas might start to feel antsy and be like, eh, we want to be around stuff again. And maybe relocate back. So.

Section 4.1 Citations

<u>S61 – Middletown, female, commuter:</u>

Um, no, I would not, so I think a lot of families-- So they have like different types of people there. So some people are really, who belong to farmland, they actually have farming going. So they have a lot of local people who live in Middletown and work in Middletown. So they have for like the milk, the South Mountain Creamery, its a huge farm, like really big amount of money they're making, so its like a big, like almost industrial style farm, and also other farms around us. They're all functional like they do like corn. They do various other things, cheese. So I would say Middletown is not a commuter town, at least not here. And this is what also people don't like because people who are from here who probably had like two or three generations back, they remember Middletown being this like little farm town, and they don't like those high educated professionals with a lot of money buying property because they don't contribute to the community. So I can understand that.

So I wouldn't say it's a commuter town, it has kind of a, its unique kind of vibe. Yeah. So it doesn't feel like commuter town. For example, Rockville does or other like, I have been to those, like satellites of Washington, Beltsville [inaudible], Arlington, even Bethesda, its kind of a commuter place. So, people buy houses in Bethesda because of schools and other things, and like amenities, but they all work somewhere in DC. Yeah. So Middletown is not. So it's far enough from everything to not be a commuter town, but it becomes, gradually become like that. Because a lot of people work probably half remote and also commute, its not too bad. For US, one hour 20 minutes, that's not considered too bad. Some people commute two or three hours. Yes [inaudible].

Section 4.5 Citations

<u>S21 – Middletown, female, telecommuter</u>

Yeah, I mean, I can definitely tell like the old timers in Frederick County don't like all the new growth that there has been. They're definitely, the people have been here for a lot of time, they don't like-- they think that it's turning into Montgomery 2.0.

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Jesse B.

Right. And that's, that's kind of like a social impact of commuting. Because, you know, it brings in people that socially are not rural people, maybe in some ways

S21

No. That I would say is a positive, because I do think it's, you know, brought a little bit more diversity. Middletown has had its issues with diversity, for sure. It's been in the news. There's been some racial incidents here. It's pretty, it's a very white town. I kind of feel like it's a white flight area, just given the demographics, because Frederick County, you need to drive over the mountain and go to Frederick, super diverse, like really diverse, all kinds of ethnicities, all kinds of people, which I love. Then as soon as you get to Middletown, you see a really stark difference, and it's pretty white. And that, to me, [personal information redacted]. I was not comfortable with that. Some people had warned us about Middletown, when we were moving here, like [inaudible] they have some racial issues there. They're not as open minded as like the rest of the county. It's where the white people apparently moved to get away from the minorities, or was at some point, but it has changed. And I think I saw that there was an incident here like a month ago where a kid, like some rural kid, which, this is the divide you also see, is like the rural hillbillies that were here before. And then the people who've moved in; he came to school with a gun with the N word written on it, or something. And people were outraged. They were like, having rallies and they were having, and I think the neighbors are really upset, and like everybody was really upset about it. So that has been a cultural change, for sure. Because I think before, maybe it would have been swept under the rug, but because lots of people have moved up from diverse areas, they're like, what is this nonsense, you know?

S23 – North Beach, female, telecommuter:

Hugely. When I came here, I mean a lot of places were still really rundown, tons of just these old crappy chain link fences, including my house, which we got rid of that and, and a lot of the people, many of them here have lived in North Beach with their families for many, many years. And they resented people like me coming in. I was like the nouveau riche.

<u>S38 – Middletown, male, commuter:</u>

Oh, good question. Um, that- that's a good question. I-- Yes and no, um, I, you know, I think, I think that there's, there's some people that are really welcoming to like, newcomers and outsiders, right, that that didn't grow up here. And then I think, you know, you have the generation that's the opposite. As somebody that grew up here, I think that we've like, we keep a very open mind. We have some very good friends that have moved here from like Northern Virginia, or, you know, like, Urbana area, right. You know, that didn't grow up here. And, you know, they're, they bring a lot to the community, as well,

different perspectives. And, you know, they're getting engaged in the community, as well. Like I said, I think they bring a good, a good and different perspective. And I don't know, like, how many people you've interviewed with this, but Middletown isn't the most diverse community here. Um, I don't know if you've looked at any of the statistics or whatnot, as far as you know, what, what the makeup is here, but we are not, we are not diverse. And but I think that is, I think that's, I think that's a bad thing. So when we get new people coming in from other areas, I, I think it's good.

<u>S39 – North Beach, male, telecommuter:</u>

Yeah, absolutely. We, my dad had a good friend who lived here. So we would come down here a lot when I was a kid. And it was very, very, very different then. I mean, I don't have [inaudible] teenager, but, and that was a long time ago. But, but yeah, the, the town was much, much more depressed in the 90s, mid 90s, than it is now. And there's still pockets [inaudible] people who have just lived here for a really, really long time. But it's definitely seems to be changing. You're seeing more and more of the old kind of shotgun houses being torn down and replaced by these giant, three story super narrow houses.

<u>S43 – North Beach, male, commuter:</u>

Not necessarily. I mean, I think there's been a, there's a lot of transition of people. A lot of the older homes have been torn down and new homes have been, you know, built in their place. I notice a lot of license plates from Washington, DC. I think people are buying up property down there. And there's, they're using it for VRBO, or you know, Airbnb and things like that, because there is a, you know, a nice boardwalk in the community. And there's a lot of nice restaurants and some small shops. So it's a, it's a nice beach community if you can't have the patience to drive to Ocean City or the Delaware beaches. So, so as far as change, I mean, not not really other than just, you know, change of, I guess the population type, I would say it's gone more from people that lived there, might even have grown up there, to them moving out and, or, you know, maybe even being pushed out and people taking advantage and buying, buying up property. And again, having the VRBOs and Airbnbs which I, I dislike, you know, it's, you have no control over who's coming and going. There's a lot of people don't, they don't care about the community. So anyway.

<u>S44 – Middletown, female, non-commuter:</u>

I didn't see that in those programs, but definitely heard it, outside of that in like the, we used to have a little local newspaper, and you know, when elections came around and talk about developments, you could definitely hear the people who had been established here not happy with all the new development happening.

<u>S69 – Middletown, female, telecommuter:</u>

Yeah, I-- I would just say I would just reiterate that, you know, a lot of us in Middletown who have been here for a long time are-- feel like, I know this is gonna sound weird to say, but like, our right to live in a small town is being taken away without our consent. Like, yeah, commuting to DC sucks for people who do that, but you can choose to live closer to DC like, I chose Middletown full and well, knowing that there were certain places that I would have to commute. If I want to go to Chick fil A, its going to be 20 minutes there and back with traffic, maybe 25. Like, that's a long way for a chicken sandwich. But, you know, when I took a walk the other day to take my kids to the park, we had like, a herd of 12 deer like cross in front of us. That's why I chose to move to Middletown. And with all this building of, oh, I want to be closer to my work. I want this, I want that. It's like you have the right to move somewhere else if you want those big buildings and those-- and a big office building and fast food and things like that. But my choice to live in the country and give up all those things is a conscious choice. And it's-- it's slowly just being taken away from all of us. I mean, there's really not that many places you can escape to anymore in Maryland to get to the small town life. So.

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100%. And I'll, -- I've talked to them before, and I've been very blunt. And they're like, oh, yeah, that makes sense. You know, they'll say, well, Middletown is so great. You know, we love this small-town feel everybody's-- we like, we have a lot of town pride, right? Like orange and black are our colors, like, schools have spirit days all the time. Like, you'll see people wearing it in restaurants, like we're really like, we have the heritage Days Festival, we're a really small, tight-knit community. And people will say how much they love that. And they're like, you know, but wouldn't it be great if you know, Middletown also had these, you know, restaurants, these chain restaurants, and like a Five Below and such and such clothing store and a Target, so we wouldn't have to go out to Frederick. And I'm like, if-- I understand you moved away to get from the city, and you come here to a small town. And when you keep building things, it is no longer a small town, you cannot have both, like you have to choose one or the other. You have to sacrifice to, to drive to places to, to live in a small town. You're making it a big town. And their like, I mean guess that's true. Like Yes. 100% true.

<u>S73 – North Beach, female, commuter:</u>

Nope. And the, and so what I see on like the Facebook posts that I see, I saw the survey come around and then, which I had already signed up for, and I thought, oh, that's interesting. Let's read these comments. And so a lot of the old timers were like, 'Oh, right. All they want to do is bring more big business in and more traffic, and it's going to kill our town.' And I'm thinking, it's gonna kill your town. Are you kidding me? Have you looked at your neighbor's lawn lately, you haven't mowed it in six months. So maybe I'm one of the ones that's-- I just feel like there's so much potential. And it's just, it's, it's very frustrating. Because like I said, I'm a designer, I'm a decorator, I ride down a road. And all I do is look at homes, like, oh, we could do this, and we could do this, and we could do this. And so when I see these people that ignore their trash can sitting out for four days in a row. It just, it just kills me. You know, that's probably one of the reasons why I agreed to this interview, because it's in my heart, there's so much I feel like I could be doing.

<u>S99 – North Beach, female, non-commuter:</u>

I think it's a mixture. There are plenty of, it used to be a very blue collar town with affordable housing for more moderate income people. And I think that's still true to the case, but it's being gentrified now. I do think a lot of workers commute. Either, there's some, several commuter buses that leave starting like five o'clock in the morning to go into DC. And then the last bus out is at 9am. So those buses are, I guess, filled enough for them to keep that service going. And then there are a lot of workers with trucks and stuff who, you know, are leaving in the morning, I once had to go to the airport from here and get there really early. So I left at 5am, and the main road out of here and toward DC was totally filled with traffic by them. So.

Appendix C: Literature Review



The effects of commuting on individuals and communities: A brief overview of the literature

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- III. Subjective Well-Being and Mental Health
- IV. Social Capital
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- VII. Changes Due to COVID-19
- VIII. Conclusion

I. Introduction

The National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG), in collaboration with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ILCRD), is pursuing a research study examining the effects of commuting on individuals and communities in the context of COVID-related changes to commuting patterns (the InPlace study). In order to situate this research, NCSG has produced the following overview of the literature relating to commuting's relationship to a variety of individual and local factors. The review is intended as a starting point for research; each of the categories presented below has a substantial literature that cannot be fully encapsulated in this report.

II. Physical Health

Commuting has been associated with physical health outcomes in the literature, both in terms of commute mode and commute duration. Active commuting (walking or biking) has been shown to be associated with meeting recommended physical activity guidelines (Baker et al., 2021), lower obesity rates (Bassett et al., 2008), and decreased cardiovascular risk (Hamer & Chida, 2008). Telecommuting has also been shown to promote physical activity (Chakrabarti, 2018). As for the effect of commute duration, a study in Norway (Urhonen et al., 2016) and another in the UK (Künn-Nelen, 2016) both found that those with long commutes had higher numbers of subjective health complaints. Hoehner et al. (2019) and Raza et al. (2021) both reported that increased commute time is associated with decreased physical activity, although Raza et al.'s association did not hold in the highest commute time category. Hoehner et al. (2012) also found associations with adiposity, lower cardiorespiratory fitness, and high blood pressure. Overall, it is apparent that active commuting has health benefits, and that long commutes (presumably dominated by car drivers) have negative associations with subjective and objective health.

III. Subjective Well-Being and Mental Health

Much has been said about commuting's effect on the subjective well-being (SWB) of individuals. The research generally finds that longer commute times are associated with negative subjective experience, but is unclear about whether this unpleasant emotional state has a long-term negative influence on SWB (Chaterjee et al., 2020; Zijlstra & Verhetsel, 2021; Stone & Schneider, 2016). For example, research that measures SWB as overall life satisfaction has often found no relationship with commute time (Clark et al., 2020; Dickerson et al., 2014). However, both of the aforementioned studies did find a negative association between leisure time satisfaction and commuting. Clark et al. (2020) also found that commuting had a negative relationship with job satisfaction and was associated with increased strain. According to classical economic theory, individuals should reach an

equilibrium between the labor and housing markets wherein they are compensated for the negative effects of commuting by other positive outcomes, such as increased income or better living conditions (Lorenz, 2018; Stutzer & Frey, 2008). Thus, while we would expect that sub-domains of life satisfaction would be negatively affected by commuting (such as leisure time satisfaction), according to this theory we would expect overall life satisfaction to remain unaffected. A few studies have challenged this assumption in specific contexts (Sun et al., 2021 in China; Stutzer & Frey, 2008 in Germany).

Clark et al. (2020) also found that commuting was associated with poorer mental health. Further, Wang et al. (2019) found that longer commutes were associated with a modest increase in likelihood (0.5% per 10 minutes of commute) of screening positive for depression in eleven Latin American cities.

Research has also been conducted on the relationship between commuting *mode* and SWB and mental health. Several studies indicate that commuting by car is the least-liked form of commuting and causes the most stress (Runa & Singleton, 2021; Gatersleben & Uzzel, 2007). However, Friman et al. (2013) and Oguz (2014) found that public transport users had the lowest well being scores, not car users. Research seems to indicate that those who travel on bicycle or on foot are the most satisfied with their commute (Friman et al., 2013; Smith, 2017). Martin (2014) found active commuting and public transport use to be associated with better mental health, but noted that several studies did not find this association for active commuting is found to be a low well-being activity with modest negative mental health effects, and car or public transit use is generally found to have the most negative associations. Long-term well-being associations are debated.

IV. Social Capital

Commuting is also hypothesized to affect community social capital. The current study aims to take advantage of the "COVID moment" to shed light on the effects of commuting on communities prior to, during, and after significant COVID lockdowns in Ireland and the United States that temporarily restricted mobility. The existing literature suggests that increased commute distances damage community social capital. However, the term "social capital" suffers from the lack of a concise definition and is multidimensional (Lelieveldt, 2004). Some measurements of the concept focus on cognitive aspects such as trust or sense of duty, and others on structural and behavioral aspects such as participation in community activities or access to certain resources found in relationships.

Many measurements take a structural/behavioral approach. Political scientist Robert Putnam, in his oft-cited and controversial book *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American Community*, found that "each additional ten minutes in daily commuting time cuts involvement in community affairs by 10 percent" (Putnam, 2000, p. 213). He also found that increased commute times experienced by a community affected even non-commuters, positing a "synergistic effect" wherein the effects of commuting "spill beyond" those involved to create an overall depressive effect on community participation (Putnam, 2000, p. 213). Putnam used commuting time as a proxy for the overall effects of sprawl, which not only include the actual time lost to commuting, but also the

social segregation and lack of "boundedness" of a community that results from suburbanization (Putnam, 2000, p. 214). Putnam's work has been heavily criticized for ignoring other important variables relevant to social capital, such as globalization and neoliberalism (Steger, 2002) and the salience of power relations (Gelderblom, 2018) among others. Still, his findings about commuting coincide with other research.

For example, Christian (2012) found that increased commute times were associated with decreased time spent with friends by both male and female urban dwellers in the United States, with males also reducing the time spent with children and spouses. Besser et al. (2008) found that higher commute times were associated with not making socially oriented trips in the United States (for entertainment, religious purposes, spending time with friends, etc). Similarly, Mattison et al. (2015) found that commuting by car in Sweden was associated with low social participation in the overall sample, and that this association increased with increased commute time (although one group, women commuting by car more than 60 minutes, was not associated with low social participation). Interestingly, public transit was not associated with low social participation except among those traveling more than 60 minutes.

However, more recent research (Foster et al., 2019) found that miles traveled to work was associated with only a modest decrease in access to neighborhood social capital resources. Foster et al. operationalized social capital as the "development of formal and informal ties that provide access to important resources." (Foster et al., 2019, p. 234). Thus, Foster et al.'s findings do not necessarily conflict with research such as Putnam (2000) that was measuring participation in specific activities rather than access to resources. Still, the result was less than might be expected if commuting is a central factor in social capital decline as posited by Putnam (2000). Foster et al. (2019) also found that increased distance to religious congregations and civic organizations was actually associated with an *increase* in access to social capital resources at these locations, suggesting that people are willing to travel to access these resources.

It is also possible that commuting's effect on community social capital has a strong cognitive dimension that cannot be measured by participation in activities or access to resources; Delmelle et al. (2013) found that those with one-way commutes of 30 minutes or longer in Vienna, Austria had lower levels of social satisfaction. Mattison et al. (2015) (mentioned above) found a negative relationship between commuting and general trust. Cognitive aspects of social capital such as a sense of duty and a sense of trust have been shown to be positively related to some forms of participation (see Lelieveldt, 2004), and thus commuting's effect on these variables could indirectly impact more structural measurements as well. All of these findings indicate the complexity of measuring commuting's effects on social capital, but they show that in general, commuting is associated with its decline.

V. Political Participation

Political participation is another vector through which commuting may affect community life. A resource model of political participation would suggest that decreased free time, such as might be expected from longer commuting, would result in less participation. Research has confirmed this

relationship between free time and political participation (Brady et al., 1995). However, research that isolates commuting as a variable suggests that commute mode may influence participation while commute time has little effect. For example, Hopkins & Williamson (2012) found that the percent of residents driving to work alone in a census tract was negatively correlated with several forms of political participation, including attending a march, attending a rally, attending a public meeting, and being a member of a political group. Williamson (2002), one of the authors of the aforementioned study, also found similar results using a different data set. However, both studies found that neighborhood aggregate or individual *time* spent commuting was not a significant predictor of the political activities they tested, with the exception of petition signing in Hopkins & Williamson (2012). This suggests that "driving alone" could be a proxy for placed-based neighborhood characteristics associated with suburban environments. In fact, Hopkins & Williamson (2012) found that "driving alone" was strongly negatively correlated with having a "traditional street grid" in the census tract and with scores on Ewing's overall index of sprawl (low scores indicate a high level of sprawl). In that vein, recent analysis has found that "interactive" neighborhood characteristics are associated with increased communication between neighbors, which is in turn associated with increased voting (LeVan, 2020). This lends support to the idea that neighborhood design characteristics could be a factor, although more research needs to be done in this area before conclusions can be drawn.

There are some disagreements in the literature. Newman et al. (2014) challenged the results of Hopkins & Williamson (2012) which negated the importance of commute time, but they were in turn challenged by Gius (2015). Newman et al. (2014) found that increased commute time (but not increased work time) was associated with decreased political participation in an area defined by a zip code, even when controlling for the percent of residents driving to work alone. They proposed a "commuter strain" hypothesis, where commuting drains psychological resources that work does not. This study was challenged in turn by Gius (2015), however, over methodological issues. He found, using the same data set as Newman et al. (2014), that commuting time had no significant association with political participation. Lidstrom (2006) also found that commuting (distance/time) was not associated with a decrease in political participation in Sweden. Thus, while the debate may continue, the primary reliable finding of the research so far on commuting's effect on political participation is that an increased percent of residents driving to work alone is associated with a decrease in political participation. This may be a proxy for features in the built environment.

VI. Local Economy and "Outshopping"

Municipalities that are transitioning from self-sustaining communities to commuter suburbs may also suffer from a decrease in local shopping, which can be harmful to local business and to governments that rely on sales tax revenue. Several studies provide evidence that commuting outside the community encourages purchasing outside of the community, a phenomenon the literature calls "outshopping" (Pinkerton et al., 1995; Shields & Deller, 1998; Findlay et al., 2001; Burkey & Harris, 2003). However, new residents moving into a community have been shown to provide more benefit to local retail sales than those who only work in a community (Shields & Deller, 1998), suggesting that residents may spend more money at their place of residence than at their place of work.

According to this logic, communities with new housing construction that is being filled primarily with commuters should still see a substantial increase in local retail sales, as long as the benefit of the increased number of residents is not overcome by the replacement of existing residents with more out-shopping prone commuters. Overall, the research in this area has been sparse and context-specific; more work is needed to confirm the broad applicability of these trends.

It is also important to note that these effects are taking place within a larger economic context where agglomeration economies and other effects of the hierarchical structure of spatial competition may be causing the decline of retail regardless of commuting patterns (Ayres, 1992; Parr & Denike, 1970). Some research indicates that proximity to urban centers may cause decline in rural retail (Johansen & Fuguitt, 1979), but the data is relatively old. Some of the most pertinent forces acting on the retail environment in the United States in more recent years are the proliferation of warehouse clubs/supercenters and the expansion of e-commerce (Hortaçsu & Syverson, 2015). The rapid rise of e-commerce has received a great deal of media attention and may indeed be hurting local retail. Still, in the third quarter of 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and after decades of rapid growth, e-commerce only accounted for 13% of total retail in the United States (US Census Bureau, 2021), showing that claims that e-commerce will soon make brick-and-mortar retail obsolete are premature (Hortaçsu & Syverson, 2015). The rate of increase in warehouse clubs/supercenters has been even larger in the United States than the rise of e-commerce and may be having an even larger effect on the industry (data is for the period 1992-2013; Hortaçsu & Syverson, 2015). Although the precise effect of these trends on rural retail is as yet unknown, the US has seen a slight trend towards retail locating in more populous counties (Hortaçsu & Syverson, 2015). US retail has also been increasing in scale, with an increasing average number of employees per establishment (Hortaçsu & Syverson, 2015; Johansen & Fuguitt, 1979), which could perhaps signal a moving away from local, smaller shops. Whether these trends are related to commuting is unknown. Thus, while sporadic research does seem to confirm the intuition that more commuting leads to more outshopping, more systematic studies could give us valuable information about the nature of these trends and their size in comparison to other factors operating in the retail environment.

VII. Changes due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated government restrictions produced a dramatic change in commuting patterns (Shibayama et al., 2021; Barbieri et al., 2021), with large percentages of people working from home during certain time periods and in certain countries. What kind of long-term impact this might have on commuting is a matter of debate. Several studies have noted the potential of the COVID-19 disruption to provide an opening for behavior change (Salon et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2021). The idea that contextual shifts can lead to behavior change relies on habit theory, which was studied by Walker et al. (2015) in the context of commuting. They surveyed employee's commute modes before and after a corporate relocation in which the company encouraged employees to switch to more sustainable modes, finding that the disruption of the relocation was associated with many commute mode changes by employees. Further, they found that the "automaticity" of the old travel mode took weeks to decay in employees and that during the same period, the automaticity of the new mode was growing. COVID-19 lockdowns have arguably produced a similar situation in

which governments have encouraged people to work from home, and these lockdowns have often lasted for weeks or months, allowing old automatic habits to decay and for new ones to form. Salon et al. (2021) documented some indicators in the United States that may prefigure future shifts. For example, they found that 70% of those who were new to regular telecommuting reported that their productivity stayed the same or increased (see also Shamshiripour et al., 2020 for similar results), and that the percentage of those who expected to telecommute at least a few times each week postpandemic had doubled from prepandemic levels (Salon et al., 2021, p. 1). According to Salon et al., these increases in telecommuting could result in a 15% decrease in commute-related car vehicle miles traveled as well as a 40% decline in transit commute trips postpandemic (p. 2). They also found that Americans plan to bike and to walk more after the pandemic (p. 2).

However, the research is not entirely consistent. Rubin et al. (2020) found that people reported being less productive (contradicting Salon et al., 2021) and liking work less during pandemic-induced working from home. Despite this, among people that reported changing their opinion about working from home, more people now viewed it more positively than those who changed their opinion to view it more negatively, adding further complexity. As far as whether pandemic-induced mobility patterns are persisting, Kim & Kwan (2021) used daily county-level mobility data collected from cell phones in the United States (provided by Descartes Labs) in order to determine the pattern of mobility change during the pandemic. They separated their data into two waves, the first consisting of the time period from March to June 2020, and the second consisting of June to September 2020. They found that during the first wave, mobility dropped significantly but then recovered to prepandemic levels. During the second wave, mobility remained largely unchanged despite an increase in the number of COVID cases and the continued presence of state-level mobility restrictions. Given the documented increase in working from home during the pandemic, it is possible that this data is simply confirming what some past research has suggested, which is that working from home is not necessarily associated with less driving (Chakrabarti, 2018). It is possible that people who telecommute might choose to live further away from their workplace (Van Wee & Witlox, 2021), but this seems unlikely to be an explanation for the findings of Kim & Kwan (2021) because the short time interval between the start of the pandemic and the collection of the data would likely not provide enough time for people to rearrange the location of their home or work.

It seems possible that this data is instead capturing an increase in non-work trips that is compensating for the decrease in work-related trips, whether from COVID-related lockdown fatigue or for some other reason. This would be in line with the much-debated concept of travel time budgets (TTB), which postulates that at an aggregate level, there is an average amount of time that people set aside to travel and that this is stable despite other changes. If some aspect of their daily journey is made shorter (such as by a more efficient highway or because they can work from home) people (in the aggregate) simply spend their travel time allotment on a greater number of activities or on activities that are further away. Mokhtarian & Chen (2004) provide a valuable explanation of this concept and a summary of the research that has been conducted which both supports and contradicts TTBs. They find that while there appears to be some stability in travel times at the aggregate level in some studies, these results do not appear to hold over all locations or times.

As with any unprecedented large change in society, the long-term effects of COVID-19 are hard to predict. The literature so far seems to indicate caution about accepting claims that dramatic

reductions in overall mobility will be permanent, but also shows a possible path through which new habits surrounding work commuting could be formed. These new habits could affect the nature of commuting's relationship to many of the other variables discussed in this literature review even if overall mobility remains relatively constant (for example, if people drive less to work but more to leisure, this could affect people's subjective commute experience). Also, there is a chance that an attitudinal shift towards telecommuting, as yet undetectable in overall mobility, will lead to long-term changes in overall mobility over time.

VIII. Conclusion

With regards to the InPlace study, the research discussed above suggests a few likely outcomes. First, residents who commute longer distances than others should, all else being equal, have lower levels of physical activity than others, and may be at a higher risk of adiposity, lower cardiorespiratory fitness, and high blood pressure. However, the research does not support a case for dramatic physical health effects. Residents commuting longer are also likely to be less satisfied with some aspects of their personal life and spend less time with family and/or friends, although many may be satisfied overall with the tradeoff they are making to commute and therefore have similar overall life satisfaction to the rest of the population. Residents commuting longer will likely have less participation in the community and social activities than other residents, and an increase in the percent of those commuting by car alone may result in a decrease in political participation in the community. Residents commuting outside of the community will do some of their shopping at their place of work, and thus will not be as beneficial to the local tax economy as a non-commuting resident (while presumably requiring similar per-capita infrastructure spending by the local government).

However, a weakness in the above research is that some of it does not examine selection effects relating to commuters moving into rural communities. Might those who chose to move to the areas in the case study locations have other characteristics that overcome the effects of commuting? This could be especially relevant for some of the InPlace case study communities that are experiencing a rapid transformation from a rural town to a commuter suburb. In order to examine this, longitudinal studies examining within-individual behavior of those who moved further away from their jobs could be conducted to determine whether the increased commute times resulted in negative outcomes. Additionally, longitudinal studies of rural towns undergoing transition to commuter suburbs could be done to examine the before and after status of resident physical and subjective well-being, social participation, political participation, and community economic vitality.

Some of the studies mentioned in this literature review did examine longitudinal/panel data and were able to capture within-individual variation across time. Clark et al. (2020), for example, found that commute duration was negatively associated with the within-individual coefficient for job satisfaction, leisure time satisfaction, and mental health, and positively associated with the within-individual negative effects of commute distance on leisure time satisfaction and family life satisfaction (see also Dickerson et al., 2014). Künn-Nelen (2016) found that subjective health is significantly negatively associated with within-individual variation in commuting. These results provide strong evidence of

causality and indicate that these associations have a higher chance of surviving any selection effects related to residents choosing to move to an outer village. Thus, while there seems to be evidence that negative associations with subjective well-being and subjective health may be robust to selection effects, a weakness in the literature seems to be that we do not have this kind of longitudinal data related to social capital, political participation, and outshopping.

Scale is also an issue that may require further analysis. Especially with relation to political participation and social capital, the size of the community in question may matter. For example, Putnam noted that residents of the United States' largest metropolitan areas have less social participation than other Amercans and that those residing in rural areas are more altruistic, honest and trusting (Putnam, 2000, p. 205). Of the other studies mentioned in the political participation and social capital sections of this literature review, there were none that controlled for settlement size down to a rural village level (the communities involved in the InPlace study are all under 5,000 population). One author, Besser (2008), controlled for metropolitan statistical area size, but the smallest category was 250,000 residents or less. Newman et al. (2014) also controlled for the population of a zip code, but a single zip code does not necessarily substitute for a bounded settlement. Many authors controlled for density (Delmelle et al., 2013; Hopkins & Williamson, 2012; Williamson, 2002; LeVan, 2020), but density does not necessarily correspond to settlement size. Others controlled for urban residence (Mattison et al., 2015; Gius, 2015) or centrality (Williamson, 2002; Hopkins & Williamson, 2012; Delmelle et al., 2013). Still others gathered data that was specific to one city (Delmelle et al., 2013; Foster et al., 2019; Lelieveldt, 2004) or was based on a case study of a few cities (Lidstrom, 2006). It is possible that settlement size could be an unobserved variable affecting all of the findings.

Additional questions also remain. How does "community boundedness" mediate political participation and social capital? Verba & Nie (1972, p. 229-247) found that residents of "bounded" communities were more likely to be involved in most types of local affairs. They defined this quality as "the extent to which the community is an autonomous political, social, and economic unit" and measured it by categorizing communities based on whether they were adjacent to an urban center (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 243, p. 234). Putnam (2000, p. 214) speculated that this might be the main culprit behind commuting's apparent depressive effect on civic engagement, noting the "spatial fragmentation" between home and work that causes one to have to choose between spending an evening with coworkers or with neighbors. According to Putnam, "commuting time is important in large part as a proxy for the growing separation between work and home and shops" (Putnam, 2000, p. 214). And yet, recent literature does not seem to address this question. In other words, it seems likely that when increasing numbers of people move into a community who do not work in a community, there will be a depressive effect on social participation. However, more research is needed.

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Appendix D: Middletown Issues, Concerns and Suggestions

D.1: Survey Results

Results from the survey show how residents perceive Middletown's strengths and weaknesses and whether they believe these aspects of town life are improving, getting worse, or staying the same.



Figure D.1a: The average ratings respondents gave for the 14 aspects of the Place Standard¹

¹ Government of Scotland (N.D.) Place Standard Tool. https://www.ourplace.scot/About-Place-Standard



Figure D.1b: The percent of respondents who indicated that aspects of The Place Standard² had gotten worse, stayed the same, or gotten better over the past five years.

D.2: Interview Results

Interviewees expressed a variety of concerns and suggestions relating to their towns. These were coded according to the subject of the concern or suggestion. Any category upon which two or more residents commented was included in this appendix, with the most often cited categories listed first. Concerns are summarized in the first paragraph of each subheading. Only suggestions (when interviewees proposed solutions to a problem) are quoted at length.

Schools:

Five out of nine interviewees in Middletown expressed concerns about schools. These concerns were related to racism and lack of diversity, overcrowding due to development, older buildings/need for renovation, and safe crossing environments for children (S21, S61, S65, S69, S8).

Interviewee suggestions:

"And really make sure that they're planning for the schools as well, and get to a point and say, if there's no room in the schools, they have to stop building houses" (S69).

² Government of Scotland (N.D.) Place Standard Tool. https://www.ourplace.scot/About-Place-Standard

Traffic, Parking and Roads:

Five out of nine interviewees had concerns about traffic, parking or roads. There was concern about children's safety, walkability, insufficient road capacity to accommodate growth, and parking in the downtown (S41, S44, S61, S65, S69)

Interviewee suggestions:

"It would be nice if they continued to work on the walkability of the town. They got Main Street done really well. But Church Street, which is the main cross street, doesn't go very far as far as walkability either direction. And I don't know how feasible that is, given that there's already a lot of existing structures. But, you know, it'd be nice if they expanded the walkability. Like I said, they've done a really nice job with Main Street. So that's, you know, I'd like to see a little more of that" (S44).

Local Business or Commercial Activities

Five out of nine interviewees had concerns about local business or commercial activities. These concerns included reports of poor management of the Safeway grocery store, lack of fast food options, a desire for more restaurants, a desire for more small, independent businesses; and concerns about downtown parking's effect on businesses (S21, S28, S41, S44, S65).

Interviewee suggestions:

"Getting some better restaurants in here wouldn't be the worst thing. They're not really into chains, which is fine. But I could go for a Starbucks" (S21).

"Solving the parking issue I think would help create opportunity for more businesses to consider taking up space in our downtown proper. And I think there's even an opportunity for our downtown to expand a bit" (S41).

"I would like to see some more small independent businesses. You know, downtown itself, I don't know that has much space. They are redoing the very old town hall. And I'm hoping some businesses are coming in on the ground floor there. I think they are. Which would be really nice" (S44).

"There are no chains that are really allowed per our new regulations. So we're not going to have anything like that. But that being said, there might be opportunities going forward for kind of having places where you can grab something quickly, and not have to, you know, really sit down for it. So that's something that's being looked at right now" (S65, Town Official).

Public Space and Facilities

Three of nine interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions about public space and facilities. Concerns included the lack of a community pool and the need for a community center (S21, S28, S38).

Interviewee suggestions:

"Unfortunately, the new high school is not going to have a pool and the town is really upset. Because we, like so a lot of us that have moved in from other areas, we all came from areas that had great indoor pools. And we are pretty irate that Frederick County as a whole seems to be lacking in this area. So we've been like sending emails to the council, like how do we get this, like, I'll pay for a membership to have a pool. [inaudible] developers in the past, but none of them have really gone through with it. So, we're kind of hoping that will change because once this pool in the high school's gone, there's no pools in Middletown" (S21).

"There's talk around, there's probably a need for some sort of community center. Just an open space, a covered open space where you can have events. You know, the sports we use the school gyms a lot, but then you're reliant on the school system to have the gyms available. Whereas if you had some sort of community center that you could use as a gym or a big events type of place. I mean, we do have one at the fire hall. But again, it's the fire hall's center. So you're relying on them" (S28).

"So, I grew up swimming, and there's no community pool. But nobody cares about having a community pool, I guess, in Middletown. Which is, I think, unfortunate...I think that's something that's, that's been lacking, but I think it's lacking for all of Frederick County, not necessarily Middletown" (S38).

Racism and Lack of Diversity

Three out of nine interviewees had concerns about racism and lack of diversity. Concerns were about a racist incident that occurred recently in Middletown schools and about a general lack of diversity in the community. Two interviewees were concerned about sending their young children to Middletown schools, and one was considering a private school (S8, S21, S61).

Interviewee suggestions:

"I'm hopeful that it will continue to diversify and, you know, attract more people, in a racial sense. Like, I would like to see more diversity here, more acceptance. Like I said, I personally have not had any issues, but the couple incidents that I've seen in school have been pretty alarming to me. And I don't think I want my daughter to be in that kind of situation where people are being racist, even if she's not part of the racism, she should not be in an area that accepts that. So I'm hoping that it will continue to get better, because people who have lived here for a while, who also were very appalled by the racism have said that it's definitely improved" (S21).

Development, Land Use and Change

Three out of nine interviewees expressed concerns or suggestions relating to development, land use and change in the town. These concerns included the loss of open space/farmland, participation in the approval process, the loss of a small town atmosphere, the preservation of a small town business climate, and the effect of development on schools (S41, S65, S69).

Interviewee suggestions:

"If anything, I would say the town should just make a really conservative effort to limit the number of houses built, protect land, zone it agricultural, if they are going to build houses, be very cognizant of the fact they need to have a lot of room zoned out for like park areas, make the houses have larger lots, you know, instead of 1/4 of an acre lots, things of that nature. And really make sure that they're planning for

the schools as well, and get to a point and say, if there's no room in the schools, they have to stop building houses" (S69).

"Again, older buildings that are being taken over and turned into something modern, and there's-- that often comes with some resistance from some residents feeling like, 'I didn't want that building to change' or 'I think they're making it too tall' or 'They're ruining my view.' And I think, things need to change, and we need to be open to that" (S41).

Public and Social Services

Two out of nine interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions about public or social services. Concerns included a lack of child care or youth facilities and a lack of medical facilities (S21, S65).

Interviewee suggestions:

"You know, it's hard, because it's like, so there's two YMCAs in Frederick County, but they're all on the other side of town. So it's like, even if they put a YMCA or something on the west side of town, it'd be so much easier for us to get to. Obviously, a YMCA in Middletown is not feasible. But even if it was Golden Mile, where it's just like, right over the mountain, like a 10 minute drive, I can accept that. But right now they're both on the other side of town. And like, yes, it's 20 minutes, but that's 20 minutes, right? So it's not convenient, and it would just be nice to have more resources, I guess, for like, kids" (S21).

"One of the things that I feel is, is missing -- we have a medical building, with doctors or whatever, but we don't have a lot of the resources certainly, but there's like no urgent care anywhere around. You have to go over the mountain, you know, to get to urgent care. And as far as all those specialty kind of medical, you know, offices, we don't have a lot of that kind of stuff. So we do have a new professional office building coming in. I would hope that we would have that type of, those type of offices coming into that when it happens" (S65, Town Official).

Public Transportation:

Two out of nine interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions about public transportation. Concerns included the lack of public transportation and the status of seniors and others who cannot drive (S61, S65).

Interviewee suggestions:

"I suggest you to talk to people who don't drive more and see their perspective because...I read some chats by people who don't have a car or for example, family has just one car so they need to share. So they Uber. And now Uber actually costs more than they make a day. So, it's not a joke...I have one friend...she takes Uber to work. And now she quit. Because she cannot afford it... So I think you need to include in your report people who are not driving" (S61).

"You know, especially for our seniors, and the fact that we're going to have more seniors coming to town, you know for them being able to get around, because, again, we have one grocery store in town, some people don't like it, some people say it's over-priced, you know, so it'd be nice for there to be
some type of transit available to get people to some of the other grocery stores, say on the west side of Frederick" (S65, Town Official).

Appendix E: North Beach Issues, Concerns and Suggestions

E.1: Survey Results

Results from the survey show how residents perceive North Beach's strengths and weaknesses and whether they believe these aspects of town life are improving, getting worse, or staying the same.



Figure E.1a: The average ratings respondents gave for the 14 aspects of the Place Standard³

³ Government of Scotland (N.D.) Place Standard Tool. https://www.ourplace.scot/About-Place-Standard



Figure E.1b: The percent of respondents who indicated that aspects of The Place Standard⁴ had gotten worse, stayed the same, or gotten better over the past five years.

E.2: Interview Results

Interviewees expressed a variety of concerns and suggestions relating to their towns. These were coded according to the subject of the concern or suggestion. Any category upon which two or more residents commented was included in this appendix, with the most often cited categories listed first. Concerns are summarized in the first paragraph of each subheading. Only suggestions (when interviewees proposed solutions to a problem) are quoted at length.

Local Business:

Five out of 11 interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions relating to local business/commercial activities. Concerns included the lack of nicer big box stores in the area, local businesses shutting down, and the desire to restrict corporate chains from locating in the town (S10, S39, S43, S73, S83)

Interviewee suggestions:

⁴ Government of Scotland (N.D.) Place Standard Tool. https://www.ourplace.scot/About-Place-Standard

"And I don't know why so many-- it seems like lately, a few businesses have shut down that have been here a really long time. We don't know why they did. I don't know -- I mean, I know the one family retired from the restaurant business. But you know, just make sure they're taking care of those businesses too. You know, so maybe we lose less and bring in more, but not a lot more" (S10).

"I mean, I think, I would be supportive of restrictions that limit or make it really difficult for massive corporate chains. Yeah, I grew up in Annapolis. And when I was a kid, when you were in downtown Annapolis, it was all locally owned restaurants and boutiques and things like that. And now, you know, the highlight of the main dock areas, Chipotle and Starbucks and stuff like that. And don't get me wrong, I patronize both of those places fairly regularly. But they do take away some of the charm of small-town world. So I'd be open to kind of restricting that" (S39).

"Oh, we could always use more restaurants. We have lines on Friday evenings [inaudible]. Oh, yeah. Mexico is tough to get into, Hook and Vine is getting tough to get into. I'm not sure about Trader's, Trader's, probably because they're about the same. Yes. More restaurants, more activity, more entertainment" (S73).

"You know, I'd just as soon not have big boxes, but that's not up to me. You know, I hope we can keep our small-town community going but I'm not a Pollyanna. I don't necessarily expect that it won't grow at all. But I just hope we do it responsibly" (S83).

Vacation rentals (Airbnb, etc)

Four out of 11 respondents expressed concerns or gave suggestions about Airbnbs or VRBOs in North Beach. Concerns included noise and disturbances, displacement of long-term residents, and a loss of people who care about the community (S23, S43, S76, S99).

Interviewee Suggestions:

"I just think it needs to be organized. And I mean, I have ideas. I don't know if they'll like them, and I truly believe that if you don't live in North Beach, and you have an Airbnb here, then you should pay and have a representative here. Someone. I firmly believe that. I mean, if they can pay to have someone mow their lawns and you know, do all this other stuff, because they live in another state, then I think they should pay to have a representative here with a posted email address and phone call for people that are having problems. And then I think it should be reported to, you know, town hall, the Mayor's office. I know the sheriff does that" (S23).

Development, Land Use and Change

Four out of 11 interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions about development, land use and changes in the town. Concerns included losing a small-town atmosphere, becoming a town for people in transition, and one particular developer who does "whatever he wants" in the town. They also included the need for more apartments, the need for more senior housing, the need to limit housing, and the need for stricter zoning regulations (S83, S99, S37, S43).

Interviewee Suggestions:

"Maybe make more apartments available. Like I think, right now, the apartment I live in, it's the only apartment there is other than the gated one nearby, so like more options for those who would like to rent" (S37).

"And, you know, there is like some senior housing, but there probably could stand to be some more senior housing, and some more like mixed use buildings where you had like some commercial establishments on the ground floor and some living units above that would cater to some lower income or middle income earners. Because, again, I mean, [a] two-bedroom house down there is costing 300 plus thousand dollars. You know, it's just crazy" (S43).

"Perhaps more limitation on housing? I mean, I think everyone says that, you know, you're the last one in, okay, I'm in, everyone else has to stay out. But I hope they do. I hope they're, I hope it doesn't become as crowded as Chesapeake Beach. I mean, Chesapeake Beach is a lot more commercialized. I'm afraid that that's what North Beach is trying to do, too-- I mean, to get the tax base up, I understand that. But I'm, I'm hopeful that we'll do it in a good way, you know, that it will be smart. Well, that's the kind of stuff you're doing, that it will be smart growth, instead of just random, oh, here's an empty lot let's put up a condominium" (S83).

"I think unless they can pass some ordinances with limitations on height, and, you know, how many variances they're giving out and the reasons they're giving them and that kind of thing-- I just see this town developing into something that's really a transitional town for people, and forget about people who might want to live here permanently. You know, I think they need to have some rules about that" (S99).

Public Space and Facilities

Three out of 11 interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions about public space and facilities. Concerns included a lack of natural/wild space, and a lack of parks or other facilities for youth (S1, S43, S76).

Interviewee Suggestions:

"I guess personally, one of, the only, you know, as far as like, the town's amenities, they have this nice little sculpture park and the boardwalk is cool. But one thing they don't have really is, like, just some, some undeveloped wild space where you can go and just sort of be among, you know, trees, and, you know, plants or whatever, like just a wild space. They do have a little bit in the park on the north side of town. But if there was one thing that I would like the town to pursue, it'd be something like that, like, I know, we don't have-- space is an issue. But personally, I think that's the biggest thing that I lack is having any kind of like, natural space" (S1).

"I don't think there's as much stuff, maybe if you were talking to a teenager or small kid, like, I don't know that there's as much stuff, there's a, there's a tot lot and a playground for little ones, but like, you know, for kids that are getting older and growing their social circles, there's not like basketball courts or

something to where, you know, or football fields where you know, or a baseball diamond where you could play ball, like there really isn't much for the older kids to do. Which is a shame, because, you know, I just, it could be better in that respect" (S43).

"I do think that the town probably should work on things that are more geared toward like, older teens, maybe and like semi-younger adults; they have like play areas and stuff for little kids. But like they made something a park that I think probably would have been really nice to be like a basketball court. And I think that was probably done for racial reasons, which is a shame. I think it would be nice to have had a basketball court for the kids to play at, instead it's like this park that's decorative. But nobody, you can't do anything with it. You can sit on a bench there, you can't play ball. There's no open space, or anything like that for the kids to have. So I think like once you're like 12 to 13 you run out of some play options in the area for kids to find something to do constructive" (S76).

Traffic, Parking and Roads

Two out of 11 interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions about traffic, parking and roads. Concerns included the capacity of town roads and the impact that growth in Calvert County will have on traffic in the town. One resident was also concerned about safety on Route 4 due to dangerous intersections (S1, S43).

Interviewee Suggestions:

"You know, maybe we could take advantage of, like, there's a big parking garage now down at Chesapeake beach for the, adjacent to the resort...so maybe we could make a deal with them and run shuttles back and forth. So people could park there. They could do things at Chesapeake Beach, they could ride over on the shuttle to North Beach, back and forth. And that way, like, you know, the traffic isn't as much of an issue, unless it was, you know, negative impact for them" (S1).

Government and Participation

Two out of 11 interviewees expressed concerns or gave suggestions about government and participation. Concerns were about not receiving responses to emails sent to the town, partiality in giving bids or recommending local businesses, partiality in land use variances, and a lack of enforcement of city ordinances relating to upkeep and maintenance of private properties (\$73, \$99).

Interviewee Suggestions:

"We talked about getting a group together and just helping the older people that live here, which are many, keep their lawns up and weed whack and edge and just take some pride. But that was kind of poopooed away like 'Nah, we're okay here.' You know, they are the old timers and they're fine with the way things are, you know? And that's upsetting to me. But, you know, I'm the newcomer. So what can I say?" (S73).

Gentrification and Displacement

Two out of 11 interviewees expressed concerns about gentrification and displacement. Concerns included investments such as vacation rentals and people moving in from the "metro area" (S1, S43).

Public Transportation

Two out of 11 interviewees expressed concern about a lack of public transportation (S37, S88).

Interviewee suggestions:

"Yeah, I think for me the accessibility to go to other areas if you don't have a car [is a suggestion]. Or maybe I'm not just familiar with the other commuter [buses] that are available" (S37).

"I mean, it's, [the town is] dependent on car culture, you know, like I said. I guess if there were anything that I would say they could use more of, but I don't know that there are enough people here to justify it fiscally, would be more mass transit. You know, other than-- there's a little commuter bus that goes around, but I don't know that it's getting used that much. I know people do use the park and rides, you know, to get into DC." (S88).

Community Events

Two out of 11 interviewees gave suggestions about community events (S10, S73).

Interviewee suggestions:

"If I was talking to someone in charge, I would just like encourage them, like I said, to just continue to have activities and things like fun things, social things, you know, to get people out and get them involved in the community... If you tell them that some people are happy that the Friday Farmers Market is gone, make sure you tell them that some people really like it and want it to come back" (S10).

"More restaurants, more activity, more entertainment. What, like I said, this Friday, this first Friday night that they have on the first Friday of every month, it was mobbed. It was packed, you could barely walk. Dogs all over the place, people getting out walking their dogs. I wanted to pet every one of them. Food trucks, beer trucks. It was amazing. Because nobody else has anything to do down here. It's like, oh, this is excitement, you know? And I don't think that there was much drama. I don't think there [were] really any drinking problems. They figured out a way to, you know, you can get one beer per night, they stamp your hand. But more, absolutely more entertainment. More restaurants, more places to go and just bring your kids" (S73).