

# Clarion

January 2022

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Greater Colesville Citizens Association, PO Box 4087, Colesville, MD 20914

[www.GreaterColesville.org](http://www.GreaterColesville.org)

## President's Message

As I write this, it is the year-end holiday season with apparently another year ahead dealing with the pandemic and its effects. The vaccine was starting to be rolled out this time last year and as a result we were largely isolated from people outside our household, unless work required otherwise. Last year I remember getting together with my family for the holidays outside in the cold driveway or in a garage with the doors open and cold wind blowing. This year those who are vaccinated will be inside warm houses enjoying time together. That's progress!

If you or someone in your family have not been fully vaccinated, I urge you all to get vaccinated unless your doctor advises otherwise. Getting everyone vaccinated is a must to get this pandemic behind us. I am sure all of us are ready for it to be over.

GCCA is still holding monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. We held several meetings in person in the fall and also at the same time via zoom. With so much unknown about the new variant, we held the December meeting via zoom and will hold the January via zoom. It is too early to decide how the later meetings will be held, so please email me to learn how we are meeting.

Many people have paid the annual dues, which are voluntary. Many of you have also donated something extra. Thanks to all!!! Please donate something extra, if you are financially able. The vast majority of our budget goes for printing and mailing the Clarion to all 3500 households within the association.

For some 40 years citizens in eastern Montgomery County have complained that we received the negative projects that no one else in the county wanted, especially the odiferous WSSC Composting facility. At the same time, we didn't receive the infrastructure we wanted (transportation, schools, rec centers, etc.). The first article below summarizes the economic condition county-

**Continued on page 3**

GCCA Officers and Chairs: President Dan Wilhelm, Vice President Marguerite Raaen, Treasurer Noel Gregos, Recording Secretary David Michaels, Clarion Editor Nancy Laich

## Upcoming Events Calendar

### January

17 **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

### February

2 **Groundhog Day**

8 **GCCA Board Mtg.**, 7:30 pm  
(see telecon instructions below)

14 **Valentine's Day**

21 **President's Day**

### March

8 **GCCA Board Mtg.**, 7:30 pm  
(see telecon instructions below)

13 **Daylight Savings Time** begins

17 **St. Patrick's Day**



Upcoming **GCCA Board meetings** will be held via Zoom. For video and computer audio please go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8896456479> where the **meeting ID is 889 6454 6479**. For phone, please dial 301-715-8592 and enter the **meeting ID 889 6454 6479**. For information contact GCCA President Dan Wilhelm 301-384-2698 or email address [djwilhelm@verizon.net](mailto:djwilhelm@verizon.net)

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## President's Message Continued

wide and indicates that job growth has stalled. This type of report has been given to the council off and on for the last 15 years and only in recent years has the council started to take steps to address it. In our area that was the 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan that called for three activity centers to complement the FDA and included the White Oak Medical Center; the largely residential Hillandale Gateway project (NH and Beltway) and mixed-use Viva White Oak (FDA Blvd off Cherry Hill Rd, and also an extension of Industrial Parkway from US29). The council also approved the 2020 Growth and Infrastructure Policy, which reduced those burdens preventing development, especially the crushing impact taxes.

There are many other parts of the county processes that need to change. The natural starting point is to develop the big-picture of what is needed. The second article provides an overview of the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan. As with most plans, there are many good parts to the vision and others that need revision.

As indicated in the economic and Thrive articles, the processing times and needless cost of the Planning Board required add-ons are the major roadblocks to development and by extension infrastructure. The third article deals with a proposed zoning text amendment that will address the processing time for bio-health projects. The planning staff is proposing to water it down and the Planning Board is requesting authority to proceed when various agencies fail to conclude their review in a timely manner. The fourth article illustrates unnecessary costs being added for both the developer and county, which points back to the third article's suggestions on how to administratively address that problem.

Dan Wilhelm, President, GCCA

## Montgomery County Economic Report

The Council had a number of speakers and a lengthy discussion on Nov 30 about the sorry state of economic development in the county. One of the attachments in the staff packet was a report from Harpswell Strategies, Inc. that included:

- The County has failed to capture its pre-2007 share of regional job growth.
- On an annual basis the current revenue impact is at least \$37M per year.
- The cumulative direct revenue impact for the 2007-2019 economic under performance is approximately \$250M - \$275M.
- The county actually lost private business establishments from 2007-2019 while they increased in the rest of Maryland by 6.9%, increased in Fairfax County by 12.5%, increased in DC by 21.6% and increased in Arlington County by 21.9%.

The report indicates that there are a number of reasons that Montgomery County is not successful, including tax burdens and low development incentives. We think the two major problems are the amount of time it takes to obtain approval from the Planning Board and the cost of conditions the Board imposes. The Harpswell report references a County Office of Legislative Oversight report (2014-10) issued in 2014 that indicates the following development approval times for the three major plans:

- Preliminary Plan: 119 days to 3128 days (8.6 years) with median of 474 days (1.3 years)
- Site Plan: 151 days to 3128 days (8.5 years) with the median of 365 days
- Record Plats: 65 days to 2383 days (6.5 years) with median of 299 days

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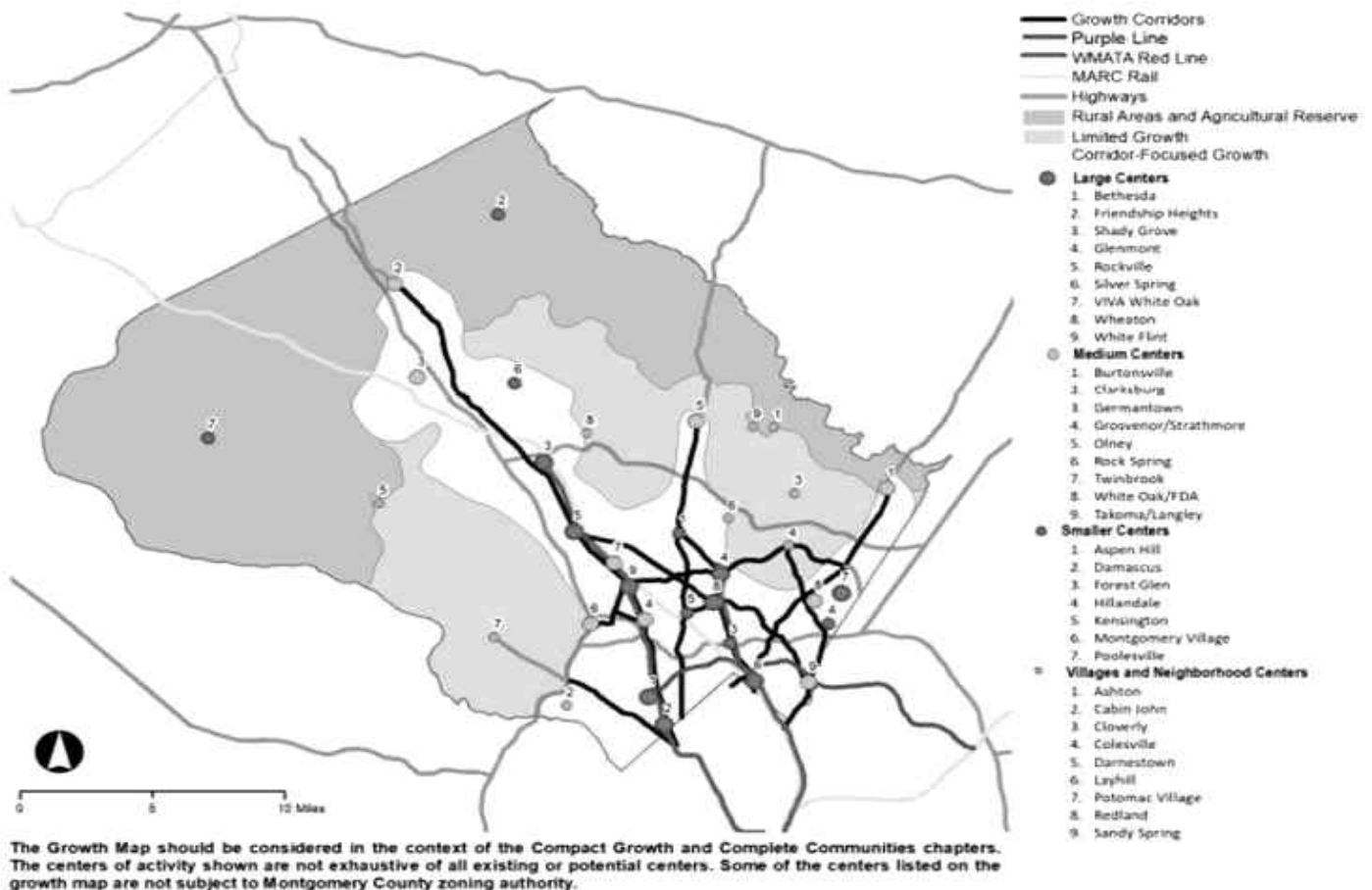
# Montgomery County Economic Report Continued

In addition to the above three plans, there is a sketch plan. Even without the sketch plan, the total of the above median times is 1138 days or 3.1 years. By comparison, the average approval times in Fairfax County is 69 days. From a developer's or owner's point of view, approval time translates to cost. Many companies also need to occupy the proposed development within a short period of time in order to get their product to the market in a timely manner. No wonder that many companies don't move to the county, or even move out when they need to expand. (The third topic also focuses on plan approval time and fourth topic on cost of conditions.)

## Thrive Montgomery 2050

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan is an update to the last comprehensive general plan that was written in 1969 (polices were updated in 1993). Once approved, the plan will become the justification for all other land-use polices/updates. The plan was prepared by the Planning staff/Board and revised by the Council Planning Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee. It will be taken up by the full Council in January.

The plan contains many good recommendations. It is aimed at addressing existing issues related to economic health, environment resilience and equity. The plan addresses those issues by providing solutions in six areas: compact growth; complete communities; transportation and communication networks; affordable and attainable housing; parks and recreation; and design, art and culture. Growth will be concentrated in centers and along transit corridors as illustrated in the figure below. The transportation improvements will focus on transit, walking, and biking as alternatives to the auto.



## Thrive Montgomery 2050 Continued

The removal of the east county (US29 and Georgia Ave) as a growth corridor from the 1993 refinement resulted in little county investment or growth in this area. Actually, the county failed to provide the transit infrastructure it promised in 1981 when it added an extensive amount of zoning density north of White Oak on the east side of US29. The forthcoming BRT and improved local bus (see last article) are a good start to address that promise. The county has favored for at least four decades the I-270 corridor. The Thrive Plan changes that and encourages development and infrastructure in east county.

The plan points out that housing is too expensive, especially for low-income and median-income families. We agree with that but not with their approach to address it. Their approach is to increase supply, by encouraging duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes be built in our existing single-family neighborhoods or to allow existing units to be converted. They are failing to address the project approval time, and the crushing costs the county imposes. (The impact taxes and other fees can add \$100,000 to the cost of a single-family house.) That high cost means houses must be large and the sale price will be out of reach for lower income families. In addition, the proposed units will compound existing parking and existing stormwater management problems in the more densely developed neighborhoods. Rather, we think much of the new housing should be multifamily and integrated with commercial and retail on what had been non-residential zoned land, as in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan.

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### Biohealth Priority Campus Zoning Text Amendment

Councilmember Friedson and other councilmembers introduced a ZTA (ZTA 21-09) to eliminate sketch plans and site plans for Biohealth development around red policy areas (i.e., near Metrorail stations), within an opportunity zone (such as Viva White Oak), and within half a mile of a planned or existing BRT route (e.g., NH and Randolph). Under the ZTA, the hearing must begin before the Planning Board within 60 days after an application is accepted as complete. The reason for this ZTA is noted above under economic development—time is money and businesses need quick response to meet market place needs.

The Planning Staff recommended the above expedited times apply only in the red policy areas, thus excluding east county and many other areas where the Council wants development to occur. Rather than address the staff recommendation, the

Planning Board indicated to the council that additional staff is needed to meet the review time and that they need to be designated as the lead agency (so they can make decisions if other agencies don't respond in the required timeframe.)

A good number of businesses and citizens supported the ZTA as introduced. GCCA also supported the Planning Board request that it be designated as lead agency and furthermore asked that they be given the authority to exclude Master Plan and other requirements that are not needed (see next article). The Planning Staff proposal undercuts other county efforts, including Growth and infrastructure Policy, Draft Thrive 2050 General Plan, Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy, and White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan. The Council will take up this ZTA after the new year.

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### White Oak Apartments

A developer is proposing to rezone (H-141) a commercial building at 2220 Broadbirch Dr (behind Home Depot) to residential. Dan Wilhelm supported the rezoning and the building of residential units, but opposed the Planning Staff re-

quirement that a public road be built on the side of the property that would dead-end into Home Depot and Dar Cars properties.

The staff is justifying the need for the road because the White Oak Science Gateway Master

Continued on page 6

## White Oak Apartments Cont.

Plan contains a line on a map entitled “Illustrative Concept” and the legend noted it as a “potential road”. (That doesn’t sound like a requirement to us.) It is not included anywhere else in the plan. Requiring the developer to build this road will increase his cost and also the county’s cost because it will need to maintain it. Dan doesn’t see a need for that road. There are four other roads included in the master plan that are also not needed and would damage other existing commercial properties. Dan made reference to these five roads in the letter on ZTA 21-09 for giving the Planning Board the reason to exclude master

plan requirements. Requiring these roads also runs counter to the Council passed Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP). The developer expects a credit if he builds the road which means the funds would not be available for other needed transportation projects identified in the LATIP (like Tech Road).

The rezoning application will be taken up by the council in January, which is expected to approve it since the Hearing Examiner recommended approval. The roads are not part of the rezoning, but we will raise this issue with Planning Staff/Board as part of the Preliminary Plan.

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## Transportation Projects

The County Department of Transportation (DOT) provided a presentation to the East County Citizens Advisory Committee on December 8 that highlighted six projects in the area:

- US 29 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Flash Reliability study is getting underway. It is looking for the third time to provide a dedicated/HOV lane from Tech Rd to Silver Spring Metro Station so the Flash vehicles are not stuck in congestion. As reported in prior Clarions, we have provided detailed comments to DOT.
- BRT design study is getting started for New Hampshire Ave. from Colesville to DC.
- Superstructure repair of the Brighton Dam Road Bridge. The schedule has the design complete in the summer of 2022 with construction to follow in the spring of 2023
- Construction next summer of an eight foot shared use path (bike and pedestrian) along Good Hope Rd. from Windmill Lane to Rainbow Dr.
- Completion of the design in 2022 for an access road in Burtonsville on the north side of MD198. This would start next to the closed Seibel’s Restaurant past the elementary school to School Access Rd. (Old Columbia Pike extension). This is a project that east county citizens have been requesting for decades to address safety issues in that commercial area along MD198.
- Start of a facility planning study for Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Dr. from Stewart Lane to Cherry Hill Rd. This would include replacing the long-closed bridge over the Paint Branch Stream. There are major traffic flow issues at Stewart Lane, Industrial Parkway and Tech Rd. The design would need to address vehicle, bike, pedestrian and transit needs in a very small and constrained space. We view this as a poor location and suggest a better location would be a new stream crossing from Viva White Oak past the White Oak Rec Center to Stewart Ln. This would provide for more direct travel between Viva and White Oak and access for residents in Viva to the Rec center.

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## Proposed State Legislation MC15-22 Special Taxing Districts

Proposed state legislation has been introduced by the County Delegation at the request of the County Executive. It would allow Montgomery County to create special taxing districts for the purpose of financing the cost of state or county transportation improvements. It would create subclasses of real property, such as residential and commercial, and thus allow different tax rates for each subclass. Currently all property is taxed at the same rate.

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The next issue of the Clarion will be mailed in March 2022. The deadline for submitting news and photographs is Friday, February 25, 2022.

Contact Editor Nancy Laich at 301-412-5301, or [nmkurgan@aol.com](mailto:nmkurgan@aol.com)

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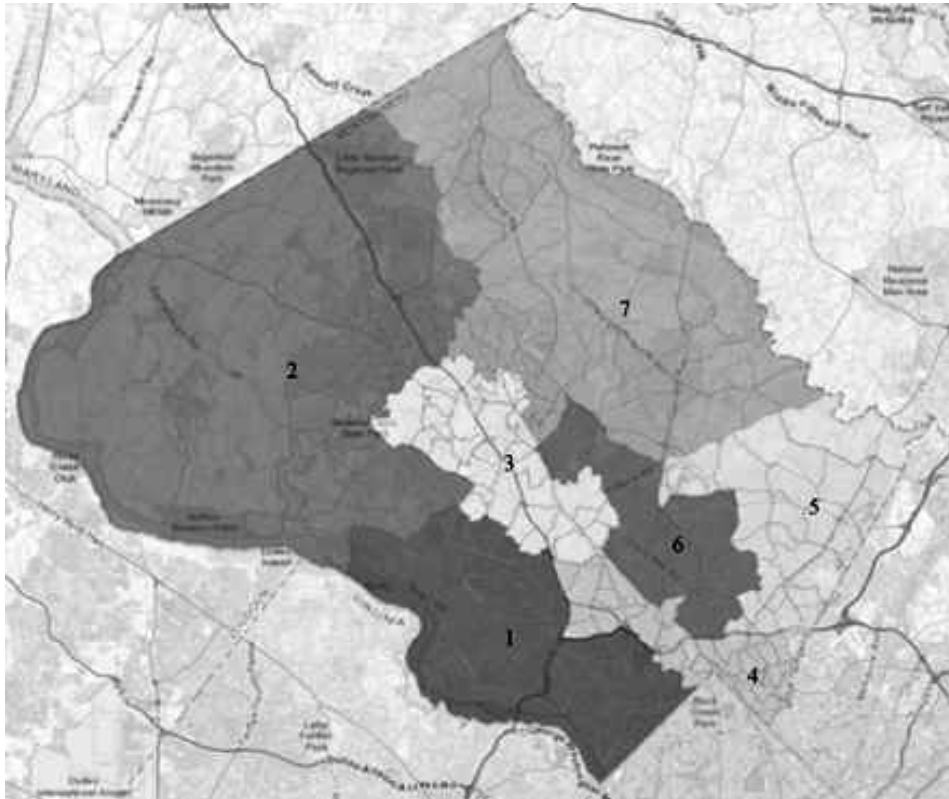
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# County Council Redistricting Proposal

On December 7 the council made several minor adjustments to the map proposed by the Redistricting Commission for the new seven council districts. The map, which we believe is the final version, is shown below. The main driving criteria was that each district had to have a population of 150,000  $\pm$ 5%. The other criteria included compact and contiguous districts while trying to keep communities together.

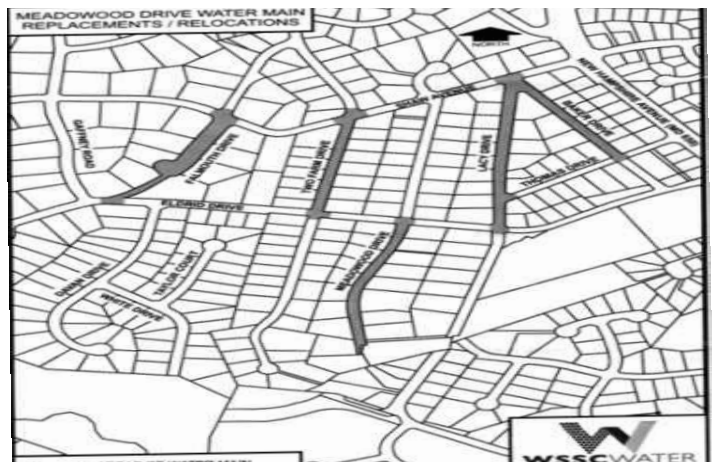
Citizens in our area wanted all of east county in one district, which is what was approved. However, to satisfy the population criteria, other communities had to be added to District 5. GCCA felt that Four Corners would be a better fit from an interest point of view in District 4 and Leisure World in District 6, but these could not be accommodated and meet the population criteria. There are many people throughout the county who are not happy with the result but this was the best that could be achieved and still meet the criteria.



## Water and Sewer Replacement Plan

WSSC announced a project to replace 1.09 miles of water main and 0.15 miles of sewer mains in the shaded area in the map below. The current lines are 40-60 years old while the new ones are expected to last 100 years.

The estimated schedule is the following: design completed in March 2022 and construction June 2024-June 2025.



# GCCA Area Representatives

(3 representatives per area)

1 Deborah Pulliam	144 Bonifant Rd.	240-440-1758	20 Chris Naughten	800 Midland Rd	758-3633
2 Open			21 Jay Hagler	1325 Crockett Ln	240-994-8993
3 Marguerite Raaen	14404 Sandy Ridge	240-938-0523	21 Benedict Eng	1205 Crockett Ln	240-388-6263
3 Fred Stichnoth	14105 Cricket Ln	706-6828	22 Open		
4 Henry Morrow	13812 Mills Avenue	384-0827	23 Dan Wilhelm	904 Cannon Rd.	384-2698
5 Open			24 Open		
6 Bill Backof	13814 Shannon Drive	384-7354	25 Ed Weiler	1008 Mondrian Terr.	236-5956
7 Open			25 Idong Essiet-Gibson	13104 Broadmore Rd.	728-6690
8 Open			25 Heather Phelps	13101 Broadmore Rd.	538-1544
9 Open			26 Beverly Roof	12928 Allerton Lane	384-7247
10 Open			26 Bob Peters	1010 Cannon Rd.	384-4410
11 Open			27 Open		
12 Open			28 Otto E. Lewis	12617 Billington Rd.	384-0567
13 Open			29 Open		
14 Open					
15 Open					
16 Sharon Brown					
17 Pat Corey	41 Shaw Ave	622-5339			
18 Ray Rye	12820 Baker Dr.	622-2276			
19 Mark Pankow	908 Hobbs Dr.	703-851-1315			

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