
Clarion

May 2026

Circulation 3500

Greater Colesville Citizens Association, PO Box 4087, Colesville, MD 20914
www.GreaterColesville.org

Annual Meeting May 19, 2026

**Transfiguration Parish
13925 New Hampshire Ave**

Agenda

- 7:30 Election of officers and business meeting
- 7:35 **Speakers: State Senators Craig Zucker and Will Smith**
- 9:00 Adjourn

Nominations: The nominations committee consisted of Mark Pankow, Ron Leung and Ben Eng. They present the slate of officers below for the fiscal year that begins in June 2026. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| President: | Dan Wilhelm* |
| Vice President: | Marguerite Raaen* |
| Treasurer: | Mark Pankow* |
| Recording Sec'y: | Pat Corey* |
| Clarion Editor: | Nancy Laich* |

* Incumbent

President's Message

by Dan Wilhelm

Do we have your email address? As previously reported, it is too expensive to mail the Clarion to all 3,500 houses within the GCCA boundaries, especially considering the expenses incurred this year to protest the development at the intersection of New Hampshire Ave and Notley Road.

Whenever an issue arises that affects our community, we email news to those for whom we have an email address. If we don't have your email, or you have changed it in the last year, please provide us with your current address. You can email it to GCCAColesville@gmail.com. Please use the subject "email address" when communicating the change. The Clarion is available at

<https://greatercolesville.org>.

You are welcome and encouraged to attend our monthly business meetings, held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month (except July and August) at Transfiguration Parish. We often meet in person and on Zoom, but when the church is not available—or other situations arise—we meet on Zoom only. Look for messages on Facebook and our website for details about how the next meeting will be held.

State Senators Craig Zucker and Will Smith will be our guests at our Annual Meeting. The State legislature approved the budget in early April, and you are encouraged to ask our two senators questions on any subject. There is much confusion and abrupt change occurring at the federal level, including furloughs, tariffs, and the cancellation of grants and programs. Every day, something new is occurring. As of this writing in late April, those changes have not had a massive effect on either the state or local budget; however, that could very well change. We look forward to seeing you on May 19th!

Viva White Oak Development Project Progress

The Viva White Oak Development Project is a comprehensive \$2 billion venture expected to span two decades. Encompassing a 280-acre site, the project has received approval from Montgomery County for the development of more than 12 million square feet of mixed-use space. The site is strategically located adjacent to the headquarters of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and close to the Adventist HealthCare White Oak Medical Center, with convenient access to US-29 and Cherry Hill Road.

As a mixed-use development, Viva White Oak will feature nearly 5,000 residential units, including both apartments and homes for sale. In addition to residential spaces, the project will introduce new retail establishments, hotel accommodations, and medical office facilities. The plan also allocates land for a new elementary school, active parks, bike lanes, and community trails. A commitment to environmental stewardship is demonstrated by the protection of over 18 acres through forest conservation efforts.

Phase-1 of the development demands substantial investment in infrastructure, both underground (water, sewer, and electric) and at ground level (such as roads). The estimated cost for these improvements is \$444 million. Of this amount, \$40 million will be sourced from county reserves, while the remaining funding will be provided by the developer.

Due to the project's scale and duration, Montgomery County has approved the use of tax increment financing (TIF), a method the county has not previously employed. This will enable the issuance of up to \$420 million in bonds, backed by the county but with the developer assuming financial responsibility.

TIF is a public financing mechanism designed to support infrastructure improvements by leveraging future increases in property taxes. It is intended to stimulate development in areas that are currently underdeveloped and may otherwise remain vacant. When a TIF district is established, the existing property tax base is frozen, ensuring that current revenues continue to support schools and county operations. Any new tax revenue generated from increased property values ("increment") is directed toward funding the development project instead of general government services. Once the project is fully paid off or the designated timeframe concludes, the TIF district is dissolved, and all property tax revenue returns to the regular taxing authorities, including schools, the county, and the city.

Phase-1 of the Viva White Oak Development is anticipated to begin in Spring 2026. All underground infrastructure and road construction are expected to be completed by 2028. Following this, construction of above-ground facilities will commence.

Viva White Oak Development Concept



Major Issues Facing Montgomery County in 2026

In 2026, Montgomery County is primarily focused on a looming **revenue crisis**, a severe **housing shortage**, and managing the local impact of **federal downsizing**. Residents are also prioritizing safety in schools and on the roads as the county navigates its FY27 Operating Budget.

Top Policy & Economic Issues

- **Budget Deficit & Revenue Drop:** County leaders are warning of a significant multi-million dollar revenue hole over the next six years. The Montgomery County Council is currently debating the FY27 budget proposal, which may require painful trade-offs in public services like library hours, park maintenance, and infrastructure to avoid major tax hikes.
- **Federal Job Losses:** Recent large-scale layoffs and downsizings at federal agencies (like the NIH and HHS) have hit the local economy hard. This "federal contraction" has directly reduced the county's income tax base and increased the need for support resources for impacted workers.
- **Housing Affordability & Supply:** Housing is a central issue for the upcoming elections. About 65% of voters report that the age and quality of existing homes is a major problem, while middle-class families are increasingly leaving the county due to rising costs—prices have jumped roughly 20% since 2020. Leaders are pushing for Thrive Montgomery 2050 goals to increase density and affordability].

Community & Health Challenges

- **Rising Food Insecurity:** Data from the Montgomery County Food Council shows that food insecurity has surged to 35%, up significantly from previous years.
- **Public Safety & Vision Zero:** Traffic safety remains a top priority, with a heavy focus on pedestrian safety and school zones. The county continues to expand programs like "Drone as a First Responder" and AI-integrated school zone alerts to combat high rates of traffic citations and accidents.
- **Mental Health & Substance Use:** Behavioral health services are identified as the most important health need by residents. While fatal overdoses have recently declined by 40%, drug-induced mortality remains a critical long-term challenge.

New Parks for Montgomery County MD

Several new and significantly renovated parks have recently opened or are scheduled to open in Montgomery County, MD, through 2026. Notable additions include large-scale urban parks in Silver Spring and specialized recreational facilities like the new skate park at Ovid Hazen Wells

New and Upcoming Parks

- **Bottleworks Lane Urban Park (Silver Spring):** This new one-acre urban park at 1110 East-West Highway is currently under construction and **expected to open in the spring of 2026**.
 - Amenities: Multi-sport court, fitness area, playground, nature play area, dog runs for large and small dogs, and a picnic area.
- **Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park (Germantown):** A major renovation is underway, with a **full grand opening scheduled for May 2026**.
 - Amenities: A brand new 12,000 sq. ft. skate park (opened March 2026), plus a new playground, carousel, and walking trails.
- **Pleasant View Park (Gaithersburg):** Opened in **September 2024**, this is the City of Gaithersburg's 30th park.
 - Amenities: A space-themed playground, fitness area, walking path, and a specialized bike track for kids.
- **Downtown Bethesda Future Parks:** Several new spaces are in the planning and development phases as part of the Bethesda Downtown Plan.
 - **Upcoming Projects:** Capital Crescent Civic Green, Bethesda Market Park, and the Eastern Capital Crescent Urban Greenway.

Recently Renovated Parks & Playgrounds

Montgomery Parks recently completed major overhauls of several popular neighborhood spots:

- **Hillandale Local Park (Silver Spring):** Reopened with new sports fields, tennis courts, a natural log playground, and a paved trail.
- **Strathmore Local Park (Aspen Hill):** Reopened in **October 2024** after a complete renovation.
- **Three New Playgrounds (Opened June 2025):**
 - **Indian Spring Terrace Local Park:** Features a tree-shaped play structure and a new playhouse.

- **Olney Mill Neighborhood Park:** Includes three large play structures with tunnels, ladders, and a "crab trap" climber.
- **Valleywood Neighborhood Park:** Features colorful artwork leading to a new swing set and seesaw.

Active County Park Renovations (Reopening 2026)



Castle Playground
Germantown, MD

Currently closed for a massive redesign; it is **scheduled to reopen in summer 2026** with inclusive play areas and a game zone.



Wheaton Forest Local Park
Wheaton, MD

Ongoing renovation to upgrade restrooms, picnic shelters, and athletic courts.



Elm Street Urban Park
Chevy Chase, MD

Phase 2 construction for the Capital Crescent Surface Trail is expected to finish by **summer 2026**.

Short Rental Issues in Local Neighborhoods

Dealing with problematic short-term rentals (STRs) in Montgomery County often stems from a high rate of unlicensed operations and limited proactive enforcement. While strict laws exist—limiting rentals to primary residences and a 120-day annual cap for un-hosted stays—the county largely relies on neighbor complaints to identify violations.

If you are experiencing issues with a neighboring rental, there are several formal channels available to address noise, safety, and licensing concerns.

Immediate Reporting Channels

- **Licensing & Code Violations:** To report a property operating without a license or violating maintenance/safety codes, contact **MC311** by calling 311 or 240-777-0311. You can also submit a service request online to have the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) investigate.
- **Active Noise Disturbances:**
 - **Business Hours:** Contact MC311 to report noise during regular hours.
 - **After Hours/Parties:** Call the **Montgomery County Police non-emergency line** at 301-279-8000 for disturbances occurring at night or on weekends.
- **Criminal Activity:** Always call 911 for immediate emergencies or 301-270-8000 for non-emergency criminal reports.

Neighbor Rights and Legal Protections

- **Mandatory Notification:** New STR applicants are legally required to notify adjoining and confronting neighbors of their intent to operate.
- **30-Day Challenge Period:** Neighbors have 30 days from the application date to file a formal challenge against a license if they believe the applicant does not meet county requirements.
- **License Revocation:** The county can suspend or revoke a license if the property is found to be a "nuisance" due to noise or activity dangerous to the community's health and safety.

Local Enforcement Contacts

| Department | Responsibility | Contact Method |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| DHCA Housing Code Office | Investigates safety, maintenance, and licensing violations. | MC311 Online Request |
| Dept. of Environmental Protection | Enforces the County Noise Ordinance (measured at property lines). | 240-777-0311 |
| Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs | Mediates disputes and clarifies rights regarding "peace and quiet enjoyment". | 240-777-0311 |

Recent legislative updates (Bill 22-23) have reassigned enforcement duties to the DHCA and increased maximum penalties for habitual violators to better address "party house" scenarios and other neighborhood disruptions

Events Coming to Montgomery County This Summer

Summer 2026 in Montgomery County, MD, features a vibrant lineup of major county fairs, outdoor concert series, and community festivals. Highlights include the **77th Montgomery County Agricultural Fair** in August and the massive **SummerFest** in Gaithersburg this June.

Major Festivals & County Fairs

- **SummerFest**
 - **Date:** Saturday, June 27, 2026 | 6:00 PM – 11:00 PM
 - **Location:** Bohrer Park at Summit Hall Farm, 506 S Frederick Ave, Gaithersburg, MD 20877
 - **Details:** Gaithersburg's massive Independence Day celebration featuring live music, food trucks, and local breweries. The night culminates in a spectacular **fireworks display at 9:20 PM** followed by the "SummerGlo" after-party with LED performers.
 - **Cost:** Free admission.

- **Montgomery County Agricultural Fair**
 - **Date:** August 14 – 22, 2026
 - **Location:** Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 501 Perry Pkwy, Gaithersburg, MD 20877
 - **Details:** One of Maryland's largest county fairs, celebrating its 77th year with the theme "Barn in the USA." Expect **Monster Truck Madness** (Aug 19), demolition derbies, carnival rides, 4-H animal exhibits, and classic fair food.
 - **Cost:** Admission tickets required; early-bird discounts are typically available in the spring.

- **MudFest 2026**
 - **Date:** Saturday, June 13, 2026 | 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM
 - **Location:** Black Hill Discovery Center, 20930 Lake Ridge Dr, Boyds, MD 20841
 - **Details:** A unique family event where kids can play in giant mud pits, create mud art, and bake "mud pies."
 - **Cost:** \$20 per car.

Outdoor Concert Series

- **Bethesda Summer Concert Series**
 - **Schedule:** Friday nights in June and July | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
 - **Location:** Woodmont Triangle (Corner of Norfolk & St. Elmo Avenues), Bethesda, MD
 - **Highlights:** Featured performers include **Patrick Alban & His Buena Vista Social** (June 5), **The 19th Street Band** (June 12), and **The Walkaways** (July 10).
 - **Cost:** Free.

- **Silver Spring Summer Concerts**
 - **Schedule:** Thursday nights in July and August | 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
 - **Location:** Veterans Plaza, 1 Veterans Pl, Silver Spring, MD 20910
 - **Highlights:** Diverse genres including **Latin Pop by Ocho de Bastos** (July 14), **'80s Alternative by Guys In Thin Ties** (July 21), and **R&B/Funk by Elliot Levine** (August 4).
 - **Cost:** Free.

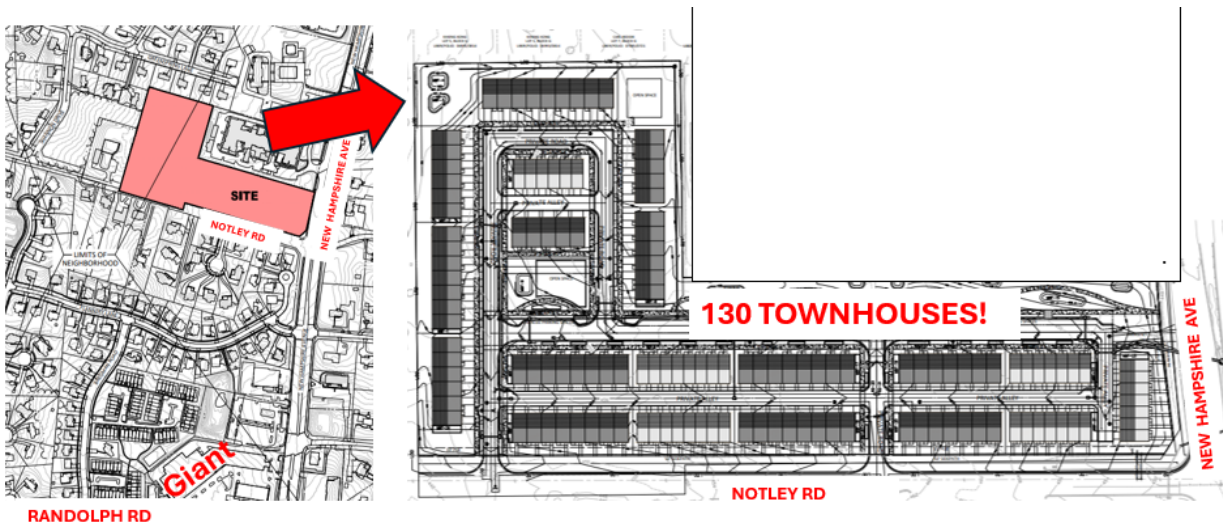
- **Rockville Summer Concert Series**
 - **Schedule:** Thursday and Friday nights | 6:00 PM
 - **Location:** The Square, 36 Maryland Ave, Rockville, MD 20850
 - **Highlights:** Recurring events like **Salsa at The Square** (starting June 4) and various local rock and chill bands.

Arts & Culture

- **Art Walk in the Park**
 - **Date:** First Fridays (May – August) | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
 - **Location:** Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd, Glen Echo, MD 20812
 - **Details:** Open artist studios, demonstrations, and gallery exhibitions.
 - **Cost:** Free.
- **Heritage Days**
 - **Date:** Saturday, June 27, 2026 | 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
 - **Location:** Various historic sites across Montgomery County
 - **Details:** Part of the America 250th anniversary celebrations, featuring local history tours and family activities.

Notley Road Townhouses Update

In July 2025, we were shocked to learn that a developer wanted to rezone 10 acres on Notley Rd and New Hampshire Avenue to build **150 townhouses**. Neighbors started to raise money to hire an attorney, Michele Rosenfeld, to voice our side so that any development is done with community input.



No Notley Townhomes website: www.nonotleytownhomes.com

We raised our concerns in front of the Planning Board in October 2025. 24 community members testified against the townhouses, and more than 150 neighbors were in the crowd and on zoom wearing “No Notley Townhouses” yellow t-shirts. Our efforts convinced one board member, Shawn Bartley, to oppose the townhouses saying that the developer tries to make the proposed development “fit on paper” but “it doesn’t fit in the community.” The Planning Board limited the zoning to 130 townhouses but passed its approved recommendation 3-1 (with 1 abstaining) to the Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearing (OZAH) hearing officer.



October 30, 2025 Planning Board Hearing – Sea of Yellow No Notley Townhouses T-shirts

In November, we began the OZAH Hearing stage of the zoning process. We've had 5 days of hearings with 2 more days scheduled – May 11 and 12.

At January's OZAH's hearing, more than **75 Neighbors attended** in person or on zoom. **27 neighbors testified against the 130 townhouses!** Only one person testified in favor. Neighbors showed their **diversity** and spoke eloquently and passionately. Neighbors stuck to facts based on experience; some called out the **"affordability"** claims of the townhomes; others talked about the **density** and **lack of green space**; still others talked about **safety on Notley Road and increased traffic**; some showed **pictures of stormwater flooding in their yards**; others raised concerns over **overflow parking in Petwyn Court and Greenspring Street**; some demonstrated on maps just how the **cut-through traffic on Sherwood Forest Drive would flow**; still others explained **how different the Morningside Townhouses are**; parents talked about **school capacity realities**. Each person added on to the next – it was a great unifying effort and we should be proud of our neighbors who spoke up for all of us.

At April's OZAH's hearing, one community member, Keith Nusbaum, testified. He asked the rhetorical question of why did the developer not apply for the Townhouse Floating Zone which would have allowed them to build 43 townhouses instead of the 130? He called the developer's plans simply "ideas" that they will not be held to – **leaving us neighbors with a 100-foot-wide wall of townhouses 50-foot-high**. He ended by stating that everyone has told us this is just the first step and we will have many more chances for input...but really, this is our **ONLY CHANCE** where decisions are made about our surrounding neighborhood that cannot be undone. In his full 2-hours of testimony, Keith emphasized that none of the regulatory pre-requisites and legal requirements were met. His testimony can be read [here](#) along with his [PowerPoint](#) slides.

WHAT'S NEXT

OZAH Hearings Continue: May 11 and 12 OZAH Hearings - Our attorney Michele Rosenfeld will put on witnesses to dispute the builder's zoning change justifications. Then, both sides will submit post-hearing briefs.

OZAH Examiner Recommendation/Report (45-75 days after): Late June 2026 (earliest)

After completion of all the OZAH hearings, the Hearing Examiner will make a recommendation 45-75 days after the final hearing date. Her recommendation could occur in mid-June or later depending on additional briefing.

District Council Oral Argument - After OZAH Rec/Report: Summer 2026

After the Hearing Examiner makes her recommendation, then the District Council (this is the same as Montgomery County's County Council) will hold a vote to approve or deny the rezoning application. We can ask for oral argument where our attorney can make an argument in front of the County Council before the vote. **WE WILL NEED A HUGE TURNOUT FOR THIS COUNTY COUNCIL ARGUMENT.** More to come as we get closer.

We've raised \$45,000 from 323 neighbors but **need \$15,000** more to fund our attorney through the District Council Oral Argument. Please donate \$100-\$200 if you can!

Neighbors can donate three ways:

(1) CHECK

Payable to GCCA (Greater Colesville Citizen's Association)
Memo Line - Notley Rd Legal
PO Box 4087
Colesville, MD 20914

(2) PAYPAL

<https://greatercolesville.org/join>

Find PayPal option on the website one time Donate
Notate your money is for Notley Rd Legal

(3) VENMO

Kyle's Venmo is: @Ksmiddie (put in the notes "Notley Rd Legal")
Last four digits of Kyle's phone number are 5195

Please Continue to Donate HERE!



New Openings and Infrastructure

Montgomery County is currently buzzing with several high-profile new openings and seasonal events, including a revamped government website and significant additions to the local dining scene.

Why do native plants in your garden in Maryland matter?

- **Government Website Redesign:** The county officially launched a newly redesigned government website this week, featuring a modern look and improved user experience.
- **Molly Tea (Rockville):** A major new tea shop has opened in Rockville, generating buzz as a premium competitor to brands like HeyTea. This is the first location in the DMV.
- **Andy's Pizza (Bethesda):** The 2021 International Pizza Challenge winner recently opened its first Montgomery County location at 4600 East-West Highway, featuring New York-style pizza and an expanded menu including starters and burrata salads.
- **The Crossvines (Poolesville):** This multi-purpose facility is a recent highlight in the Agricultural Reserve, offering a bistro, winery, custom grape-crushing facility, and special events venue.
- **Wheaton Community Recreation Center:** A state-of-the-art, LEED-certified facility that recently opened, featuring multi-purpose spaces, a library, and a destination playground with musical structures.

Reasons to Choose Native Plants for Gardens

Native plants in Maryland gardens are crucial for supporting local biodiversity by providing essential food and habitat for pollinators and songbirds. They are adapted to local soils and climate, requiring less water, fertilizer, and maintenance while reducing nutrient pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. They strengthen ecosystems, improve soil, and reduce storm water runoff.

Key Reasons to Choose Native Plants in Maryland:

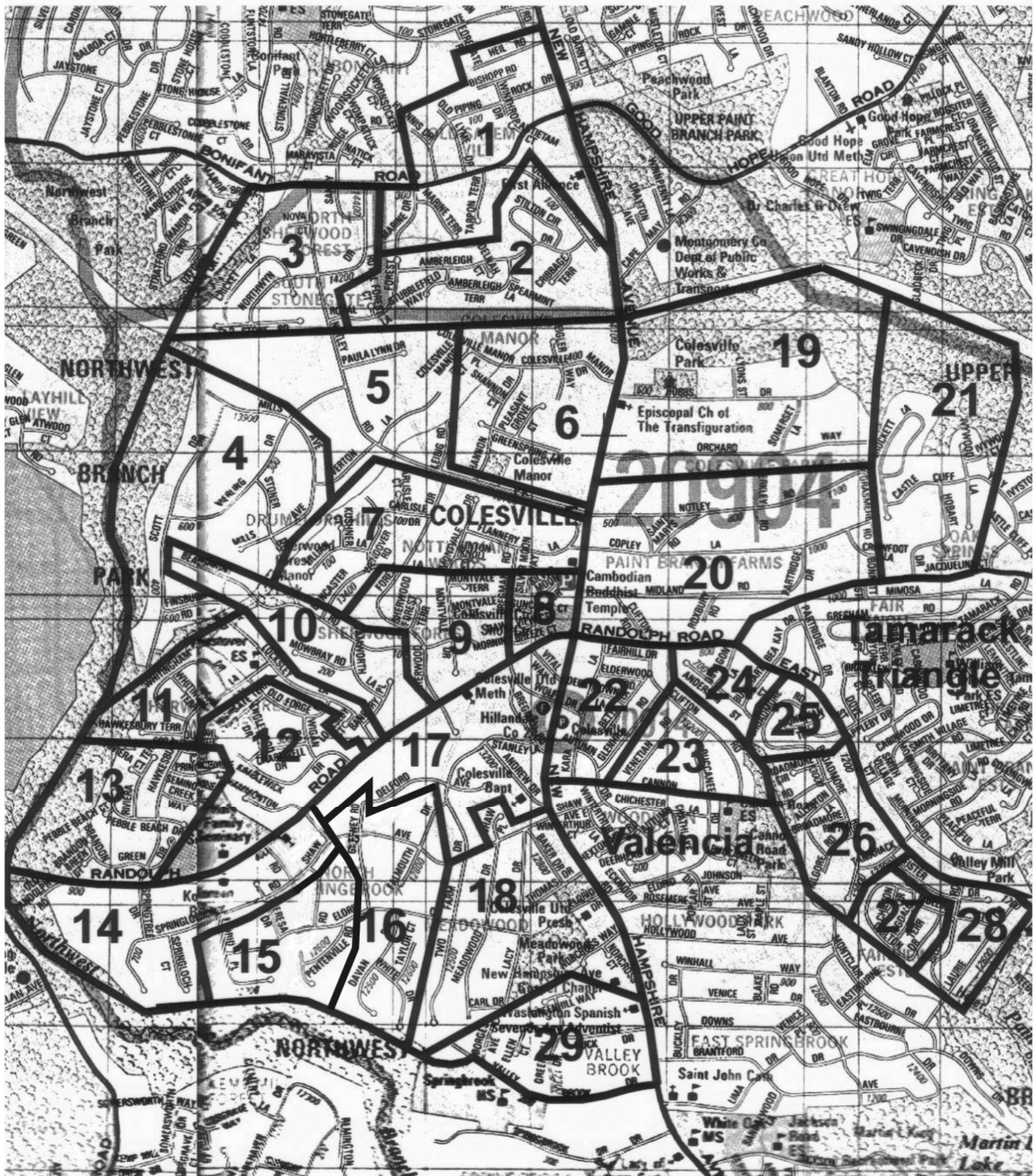
- **Supports Wildlife & Pollinators:** Native plants offer superior sources of nectar and pollen for pollinators. They provide critical habitats for caterpillars and other insects needed to feed baby songbirds.
- **Low Maintenance:** Because they evolved in Maryland's hot, humid summers and mild winters, they are generally hardy and require little to no fertilizer, pesticides, or extra watering once established.
- **Environmental Protection:** Deep-rooted native plants stabilize soil and decrease polluted stormwater runoff into local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Using natives helps counteract habitat loss, restoring natural ecosystems within urban and suburban environments.
- **Preventing Invasive Species:** Choosing native species prevents the introduction of invasive, non-native plants that damage local biodiversity.

Key Native Plants for Maryland Gardens:

- **Trees:** Red Maple, Flowering Dogwood, White Oak.
- **Shrubs:** Spicebush, Blackhaw Viburnum.
- **Perennials:** Milkweed (vital for Monarch caterpillars), Black-eyed Susan, Joe Pye Weed, White Turtlehead (essential for the Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly).

For personalized recommendations, use the University of Maryland Extension's Native Plant Finder or the Audubon Native Plant Database for specific native plants in your area

GCCA Membership Areas



GCCA Area Representatives 2026

| | | | |
|----|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Open | | |
| 2 | Open | | |
| 3 | Marguerite Raan | 14404 Sandy Ridge | 240-938-0523 |
| 4 | Open | | |
| 5 | Open | | |
| 6 | Bill Backof | 13814 Shannon Dr. | 301-384-7354 |
| 7 | Open | | |
| 8 | Open | | |
| 9 | Michael Persh | 208 Montvale Terrace | 301-879-4560 |
| 10 | Open | | |
| 11 | Open | | |
| 12 | Open | | |
| 13 | Open | | |
| 14 | Open | | |
| 15 | Open | | |
| 16 | Sharon Brown | | |
| 17 | Pat Corey | 41 Shaw Ave. | 301-622-5339 |
| 18 | Ray Rye | 12820 Baker Dr. | 301-622-2276 |
| 19 | Mark Pankow | 908 Hobbs | 703-851-1315 |
| 20 | Chris Naughten | 800 Midland Rd. | 301-758-3633 |
| 21 | Benedict Eng | 1205 Crockett Lane | 240-388-6263 |
| 21 | Jay Hagler | 1325 Crockett Lane | 240-994-8993 |
| 22 | Open | | |
| 23 | Dan Wilhelm | 3156 Gracefield Rd., Apt. 505 | 301-384-2698 |
| 24 | Open | | |
| 25 | Ed Weiler | 1008 Mondrian Terrace | 301-236-5956 |
| 26 | Bob Peters | 3158 Gracefield Rd., Apt. 602 | 301-384-4410 |
| 27 | Open | | |
| 28 | George Ezikpe | 1310 Leister Dr. | 301-717-0625 |
| 29 | Alcira Groomes | 204 Valley Brook Dr. | 301-625-8919 |

There are slots for 3 representatives from each Area.

GCCA DUES PAYMENT TIME - MEMBERSHIP IS IMPORTANT

PLEASE JOIN GCCA: The annual dues are \$10.00 per person per year (May 2024 through May 2025). Contributions are vital to GCCA's mission of improving our Colesville community. **Make checks payable to GCCA and mail to P.O. Box 4087, Colesville, MD 20914.** Or, go to greatercolesville.org and pay online.

NAME(S): _____ Area # (if known) _____

ADDRESS: _____ PHONE _____

Dues _____ GCCA Donation _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____