

## President's Message

During October and November there was a flood of comments on the Nextdoor social media site about the deterioration of our area. The articles started with complaining that Randolph Plaza, the new commercial area just west of the Kramer Colesville (Giant) Center, has been empty for years. It then spread to issues about other areas in Colesville, including school performance.

Many residents throughout Eastern Montgomery County (EMC) want jobs closer to home, more retail, especially nicer restaurants, improved school test scores, as well as solutions to road congestion, and improving public transportation.

The old phrase 'it takes a village' largely reflects how GCCA gets things done. Very small items can be accomplished by individuals, often simply by calling 311. For many middle-sized and larger concerns the Greater Colesville Citizens Association (GCCA) is the village that can get things done. GCCA also works with other groups in EMC to tackle the larger issues. The length of time to effect change is directly related to size and complexity: from a few weeks, to a year or two, and for the largest issues many years, or even a decade or more.

GCCA has been working on a number of medium-sized issues to improve the appearance of the Colesville commercial area via the revitalization effort described later, and has been active in the past with senior housing on either side of the Cambodian Temple. As explained below, Shane Pollin came to our December meeting to talk about Randolph Plaza and to a lesser extent development in Hillandale. We are in contact with the Post Office as explained later to address its appearance and service issues. Based upon the Nextdoor comments and the December meeting, we will work with concerned citizens to meet with the Colesville Center managers to determine what can be done about improving the appearance of that center. The retail vacancy issue is difficult because with the increase of on-line shopping, many brick and mortar stores are going out of business. I think to effectively address that

**Continued on page 3**

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

## Upcoming Events Calendar

### January

21 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

24 National Compliment Day

### February

2 Groundhog Day

5 Chinese New Year (year of the pig)

12 GCCA Board Mtg., 7:30 pm  
(see directions below)

14 Valentine's Day

17 National Random Act of Kindness Day

18 Presidents' Day

### March

6 Ash Wednesday

8 International Women's Day

10 Daylight Saving Time Begins  
Turn clocks forward one hour

12 GCCA Board Mtg., 7:30 pm  
(see directions below)

20 First day of Spring

No School, Mo. Co. Public School

**HAPPY  
VALENTINE'S  
DAY**

Upcoming **GCCA Board meetings** will be held at 7:30 pm at the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration, 13925 New Hampshire Ave. Meetings are in the room under the sanctuary and are open to the public. 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

issue, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service needs to come to Colesville so more people are attracted to the center. That is a major effort that has already been underway for about a decade and we are still many years away from getting it.

Most other issues raised on Nextdoor are large ones that require us to work with others. As explained in an article on page 6, some of us are volunteering with MCPS in an effort to improve the education of our children. Some GCCA members attend the East County Citizens Advisory Board meetings since they are a voice primarily to the County Executive, and to a lesser extent, county council and agencies. The Regional Services Director, Jewru Bandeh, is active on multiple fronts including getting adult training and social services in EMC.

Another group that is very effective with attracting jobs and retail, and addressing transportation, issues is LABQUEST, which many people don't know exists. I have been an active member of LABQUEST for a number of years.

LABQUEST was formed by local citizens in the 1990s to focus on the reuse of what at the time was the closed Naval Base in White Oak. LABQUEST consists of representatives from all three levels of government, multiple local citizen groups/individuals, and major commercial property owners. After the Naval Base was closed, they interviewed representatives from multiple federal agencies and selected the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to come here. They have worked for 27 years to get federal funding for the buildings that house FDA and worked with GSA/FDA to support the move here. They also worked with the Department of Defense to retain the Wind Tunnel and have it transferred from the Navy to the Air Force. They have worked all this time with the Navy to environmentally clean-up the facility, which is almost complete.

The common vision of LABQUEST and FDA is that the White Oak Medical Center (WOMC) will provide a place for FDA medical doctors to practice medicine in order to keep their clinical skills sharp and improve our access to high quality medical care. The vision calls for many companies from across the globe to have a presence here to improve their collaboration with FDA, and thus bring their products to market faster and at a lower cost. This will provide jobs for those who live in the area. FDA employees and all of us who live in the area want nice restaurants, shopping, and entertainment venues. The three activity centers in the White Oak Science Gateway (WOSG) Master Plan (MP) (especially Viva White Oak) will provide housing, employment opportunities, and retail establishments. LABQUEST has also been actively supporting near-term WOSG MP envisioned development: WOMC, Viva White Oak, Hilton Hotel and Hillandale Gateway (see diagram on page 11). To provide mobility to support this expansion, and to reduce existing congestion, LABQUEST has supported the BRT service and the Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP).

While the focus of LABQUEST is FDA and the area near it, much of EMC, including Colesville, will benefit. The development in EMC has largely been stagnant for the last 35 years with the primary exception of the FDA relocation. Restaurants and most other retailers need customers at lunch, nights and weekends to be economically viable. We expect the jobs, housing, and retail in the WOSG MP area will lead to occupied retail in Colesville, especially once BRT and improved local bus service is implemented.

The major thrust of improving the area has been underway for over 10 years. We are at the point where the first buildings are being occupied and other efforts are near to emerging from the planning stage. The articles below explain some of these. There are also articles that talk of the effort to improve existing facilities.

It is not possible to include here more than a summary of major items. The best way to stay informed and have a say is to attend the monthly GCCA meetings. All are welcome to attend. In the last Clarion, I made an appeal for more people to become dues paying members and to donate a little something extra to cover our rising costs. I thank all who have contributed and encourage the remainder of you to do so.

Dan Wilhelm can be contacted at 301-384-2698, [djwilhelm@verizon.net](mailto:djwilhelm@verizon.net)

# Improvements Planned for Greater Colesville

## Randolph Plaza

We invited Shane Pollin, Director of Development with The Duffie Companies, to our December 11 meeting to talk about the Randolph Plaza center, since it was an area of concern on Nextdoor. Shane indicated that the Duffie Companies moved its headquarters into the top two stories of the 16,000 sq ft office building at 57 Randolph Road after it was constructed in the summer of 2017, so the buildings are not vacant. They are looking for tenants for the first floor. A restaurant has signed a lease for and will be occupying the 4,000 sq ft retail building once they obtain building permits from the County and complete construction.

Mr. Pollin indicated The Duffie Companies owns and manages the Hillandale Shopping Center, the office building at 10001 New Hampshire Avenue (at the intersection of New Hampshire Ave and Elton Road, and occupied by the FDA), and are building the new Home2 Suites by Hilton Hotel at 1701 Elton Road. He also indicated that as long-term owners/operators (starting in 1953), they build quality buildings with a focus on high performance and long-term sustainability. He noted that everyone must meet the County building code but that doesn't ensure long-term sustainability, durability, or quality. Duffie builds well above code in terms of construction methods, materials and energy/water conservation. The 10001 New Hampshire Avenue building was designed to satisfy the Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) Gold criteria (before it was a County requirement) and their home office at 57 Randolph Road has achieved a LEED Platinum certification. They are also striving to achieve LEED Platinum certification for the Hilton Hotel. Less than 10 hotels throughout the entire country have achieved that level.

The Duffie Companies have partnered with the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) to demolish the existing 96 unit outdated Holly Hall affordable housing property on the West side of New Hampshire Ave at the Beltway. They have received sketch plan approval for a mixed use, mixed income (targeting 25% affordable) project called Hillandale Gateway, which is currently programmed to include ~150 age-restricted units, ~350 non age-restricted residential units, and retail on the first floor. They will be striving to achieve LEED Platinum Certification for both buildings and zero net energy for the age restricted building (because they don't have enough space for solar panels to achieve zero energy use for the entire development).

The presentation from Mr. Pollin satisfied community concerns relative to Randolph Plaza and the company's commitment to being a good member of the community.

## Colesville Commercial Building Revitalization

The County Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCA) has been active in Colesville since 2012. They are working with business owners to voluntarily improve the outside appearance of their commercial properties. Using funding that Councilmember Navarro got added to the budget, the county will pay up to 50 percent for costs associated with making qualified improvements. They have completed the improvement to the building where the 7-Eleven is located and are in discussions with the owners of buildings behind the 7-Eleven and the Meadowood Shopping Center. They have talked with the building owner on the east side of New Hampshire just south of Meadowood (Noodle King, barber shop area), but that owner has decided not to improve his property. For more details see [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DHCA/community/neighborhood/Colesville.html](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DHCA/community/neighborhood/Colesville.html).

## Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies

We expect there will be two ribbon cutting events in February, but the exact dates have not been set. One event is The Landing of Silver Spring assisted senior housing at 13908 New Hampshire Ave on the north side of the Cambodian Temple. The other ribbon cutting is for the Hilton Home Suite 2 Hotel on Eldon Rd in Hillandale. Once we hear about the dates, we will post them on our web site and put them on social media. We also expect the White Oak Hospital Center to open in August and we will provide more information later in the year.



## Post Office Issues Addressed USPS Reps Attend GCCA Meetings

As reported in the January 2018 Clarion, we have been having appearance issues with the Post Office for many years. With Congressman Raskin's help, we invited the Silver Spring Postmaster, Gab Hamilton, to attend our November 2017 meeting, and he promised to address the problems. He did get the grass cut once at the end of the 2017 growing season, and the height of the hedge was lowered with a promise to reduce it further last spring. (It had gotten too tall to cut down all at one time without the risk of killing the plants.) He also got the parking lot lights repaired.

During the 2018 growing season, the grass was once again rarely cut, the hedge not maintained and trash was not picked up. After repeated calls and emails to Gab, we again contacted Congressman Raskin's office and found out the postmaster had been replaced. We talked with the new Postmaster's "go to" manager to address the problems. The trash pickup has improved, but is still not entirely where it needs to be. The grass cutting was partly taken care of, but it wasn't cut regularly, and trimming didn't occur. The hedge was also never trimmed or vines cleared out.

On top of the above problems, many of us have had service problems in the last few months. Mail was delivered much later in the day – even well after 7 PM. There also have been increased problems with non-deliveries, incorrect deliveries, and non-pickup of outgoing mail.

The Tamarack Triangle Citizens Association sent a letter to USPS Headquarters complaining about the service. We have also complained to the Silver Spring Postmaster and USPS headquarters. We have invited the Silver Spring Postmaster to attend our January 8 meeting. We will keep pushing USPS to correct these problems. (This is another example of multiple groups needing to work together.)

## ***Recycling Unneeded Drugs.***

Many of us have unneeded drugs in our medicine cabinets. The question is how to get rid of them. Some people flush them down the toilet, where they can end up in the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay and possibility harm aquatic life. That option should be avoided if possible.

The best alternative is to drop them off at Prescription Drug Repository and Pharmacy Drop-off Locations approved by the Maryland Board of Pharmacy. The closest such locations are:

Brookville Pharmacy  
5454 Wisconsin Ave, Suite 400  
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The county solid water web site provides information about disposing of unneeded drugs in the trash: <https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/DepHowDoI/>.

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**The next issue of the Clarion will be mailed in March 2019. The deadline for submitting news and photographs is Friday, February 22, 2019**

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

**For inquiries about advertising in the Clarion, please email Dave Michaels at [emailbits@gmail.com](mailto:emailbits@gmail.com)**

# Public School Performance is Problematic in the County

Another concern raised on Nextdoor was the poor performance of our public schools. That concern is widely shared by many citizens in our area, by the County Council, the Executive, the Board of Education, and by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). There is no easy fix to this problem since it has many causes.

MCPS has an effort underway to improve their reporting systems so they can better identify schools, individual classes, and individual students who need help. There are a large number of children who enter school but are not ready to learn. The County has added more schools that offer pre-K programs, some half day and others all day. This effort focuses on low income families, because a high percentage of children in this situation need the extra help. There are two obstacles to widespread expansion of Pre-K: limited funding and limited space for the classes.

There are also three related efforts underway by a group of citizens from GCCA, Valencia and Burnt Mills Citizens Associations. First, a small number of retired members are volunteering to assist classroom teachers. They undertake a number of instructional activities at the direction of the teacher, including helping a small group of students who need extra help with reading or basic math. They provide help in these areas while the teacher works with the remainder of the class. This requires both a willingness of local principals and individual teachers, and it will take some time before a large number of them feel comfortable accepting the help and feeling it is worthwhile.

Second, we have realized that the above ad hoc approach needs more structure to be widely used. We have been meeting with Dr. Johnson, the MCPS Chief of Staff, quarterly. The idea is that each school will publish its volunteer opportunities on the County Volunteer Web so people who want to volunteer can learn about them. A pilot program is being set up at three elementary schools: Burnt Mills, Page, and Leleck. Dr. Harris, who works for Dr. Johnson, has set up accounts on the Volunteer Center web site ([www.montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter/](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter/)), and in early January representatives from the three schools will enter their need for volunteers. Initially the volunteer opportunities are expected to be items other than helping with classroom instruction. As a new area, we need to take it slow and make adjustments where needed; we need to “crawl before we walk and then run.”

Third, a number of us are supporting one of the two after-school enrichment programs at Cannon Road Elementary School. Principal Donohue’s two programs are called Genius Hour Club and Makerspace Club. In the Makerspace Club, volunteers are introducing electronics to those students who are interested. We have one group on Monday and the other on Wednesday for an hour for six weeks. We generally have volunteers at five tables, typically each with five students. The students started with building a circuit to make a low voltage light blink and changing a computer program to control it. We also made a weather station to measure temperature and humidity, and made a traffic signal. The children built a car that runs forward and backward. The children will be modifying the computer program to control the speed of each wheel and to add the ability to “see” – keep from running into things and following a road.

On the last front, we have been working with the Northeast Consortium PTA AVP to encourage MCPS to fund a planning study about how they will accommodate the large increase of students that will be coming from Viva White Oak, White Oak Town Center, Hillandale Gateway, and other likely developments (see diagram on page 11). The latest MCPS Capital Improvements Program document indicates that 8570 units, mostly multifamily residential, are projected to be built and that the County anticipates that build-out will take 20-30 years. That means the last house will be built then, which is probably accurate. They need a plan as to how they will accommodate students when the first houses will be occupied, which we expect to be around 2023. We think that some 4000 units will likely be built in the next 4-10 years. Since it takes MCPS at least four years to plan and build any new school or addition, we contend they need to begin planning now.

Recycling Unneeded Drugs. Many of us have unneeded drugs in our medicine cabinets. The question

# Transportation Update

## Bus Rapid Stations & Road Improvements

The County has started construction of the eleven Bus Rapid Stations along/near US29. The station canopy, seats and fare equipment will be installed just before it opens for service - sometime in 2020. The 14 articulated vehicles have been ordered with an expected delivery in late 2019. GCCA and the other groups identified above have been active supporting this effort.

The Duffie Companies have proposed five road improvements in Hillandale to reduce congestion at the New Hampshire Ave and Powder Mill Rd intersection in accordance with the County approved Local Area Transportation Improvement Program (LATIP). Two of the improvements will directly address concerns citizens in that area have about cut-thru traffic. Because of the way the county handled this situation, a number of citizens don't understand that their concern is being addressed. The proposal must be approved by the County Department of Transportation. This is just the first of 27 projects in the LATIP. GCCA and LABQUEST have been very active with the County to first get the LATIP process created and then to support the Duffie proposal. To be fully successful, developers like Duffie and GLDC need to work with the community and build a number of the LATIP improvements rather than just making a payment to the county. Without that, the quality of the design will suffer and construction will be many years longer before they are designed and constructed.



## Viva White Oak Update

Almost eleven years ago Global LifeSci Development Corp (GLDC) submitted a bid to the County in response to a Request for Proposal to redevelop the old WSSC Sewage Composting Site II. GLDC proposed developing both Site II and their adjacent property in what is now being called Viva White Oak (see diagram on page 11). GLDC has just obtained title to that property and as a result, they can sign contracts for businesses to come here.

Three events happened the last week in November. On Tuesday, November 27, the Council approved funds for a permanent salt storage facility in the I-270 corridor. Then the county could stop using Site II temporarily to store road salt, and thus allow their contractor to continue demolishing the facility. On Thursday, November 29, the Planning Board approved the Preliminary Plan, which cleared the way for County Executive Ike Leggett and GLDC to sign an agreement on Nov. 30 transferring title of Site II to GLDC. LABQUEST has been active with getting the many intervening items approved so that this development can now go forward.

## Winter Storm Response

With January comes the real possibility of measurable snow. The county web site has three portals at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/snow/> to provide us with information.

The first portal deals with who plows each street. The State plows all numbered roads, which are state/federal roads. Some homeowners, businesses and other local governments plow some other roads. Once the street is entered in the portal, it identifies who has responsibility for plowing it. A second portal provides status for county plowed roads. A third portal provides the ability to submit a request to the County or State for roads the public thinks should have been plowed and were missed.

The site contains a "how to" guide and as part of it, a link to frequently asked questions. It points out the best way for us to help is to park our vehicles in our driveways or on the EVEN numbered side of the street to allow the plows to clear more of the street. Also recall that county code requires residential, commercial, and multi-unit apartment building property owners to clear their public sidewalks, driveways, and entrances within 24 hours of the end of a snowstorm.

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# GCCA Membership Areas



# White Oak Science Gateway (WOSG) Master Plan



## GCCA DUES PAYMENT TIME - MEMBERSHIP IS IMPORTANT

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