



Montgomery County Community Toolkit

for the Mid-County communities of

Aspen Hill, Brookeville, Capital View, Derwood, Forest Glen, Glenmont, Kemp Mill, Kensington, Layhill, Norbeck, Olney, Sandy Spring, Upper Rock Creek, and Wheaton

Modified August 2014

Isiah Leggett
County Executive



Ana L. van Balen
Director

Dear Community Leader:

I am pleased to announce the updated Community Toolkit with you. We have listened and heard from many of you regarding your questions on how to make your community stronger. Particularly, we have heard from individuals who long to build bridges with their neighbors from diverse backgrounds who often speak other languages to share information, to get connected and consequently, to strengthen the social fabric of their neighborhoods.



This toolkit is meant to assist you in working towards that goal. What follows are strategies geared towards starting, improving, and growing civic associations, which are important forums for county residents to address matters within their communities. The civic associations in Montgomery County are non-partisan institutions of self-governance that help build stronger communities and act as intermediaries between residents and county government and elected officials.

For this reason, we hope this toolkit can offer you ideas on how to spark dialogue and in the long-term, deepen relationships with people in your community so that together you can achieve the goals and aspirations of your communities. If you decide to use the strategies offered in this resource, please let us know. We want to support you in your efforts and learn with you as you try and tailor something for your community. And as you do, we hope that conversations, interactions and ultimately, civic engagement will look differently than it does today—richer and reflective of the reality of our changing communities in Montgomery County.

Thank you for reading, listening and possibly hoping with us to build a stronger Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Isiah Leggett in black ink.

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

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Regional Services Center

Role of the Mid-County Regional Services Center Director

The Mid-County Regional Services Center is the local government office for Ashton, Aspen Hill, Brookeville, Capital View, Derwood, Forest Glen, Glenmont, Kemp Mill, Kensington, Layhill, Norbeck, Olney, Sandy Spring, Upper Rock Creek, and Wheaton communities. A map of the full coverage area can be found in Appendix A.

The Regional Services Director informs Montgomery County leadership of regional perspectives, expedites responsive service delivery and connects with local organizations and leaders to get their input on issues of local importance.

The Director offers problem solving and information and referral services to the region. The Director of the Regional Services Center is a member of the County's Senior Management Team with direct access to the County Executive and department heads. Along with this liaison function, the Director also:

- Identifies regional priorities and future service needs;
- Implements local community initiatives and;
- Oversees County services in downtown Wheaton performed by the Wheaton Clean and Safe Teams.

Contacting the Center

You may contact the Center by phone at 240-777-8100. We are located in downtown Wheaton at 2424 Reedie Drive, 20902. Please visit our website at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/midcounty> for general information. You may also reach us by email at midcounty.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Mid-County Newsletter

The Mid-County Regional Services Center offers a monthly e-newsletter called “Your Mid-County”. To subscribe, go to: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/midcounty>

- Scroll to the bottom of the page to click on “Subscribe to our Newsletter”.
- Enter you email address and then press **Submit**.

Follow the Mid-County Regional Service Center on Social Media

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mid-County-Regional-Center/117155768314714>

Director’s Blog: <http://midcountydirector.blogspot.com>

Citizens Advisory Board



The Mid-County Regional Services Center is also home to the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board. The primary role of the Board is to provide substantive advice and recommendations on regional issues and needs to the County

Executive and the County Council, and act as a facilitator to foster solutions to community problems, needs, and issues.

The 15-member Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) serves as Montgomery County's bridge to the 220,000 residents and businesses spread throughout the 99 square miles of the Mid-County area of Montgomery County. As representatives to and from the business and residential communities, the Board strives to reflect the varying points of view within the region.

Citizens Advisory Board Community Forum

At the beginning of each of its meetings, the Citizens Advisory Board invites the community to present any concerns it may have.

Issues raised by community members are sent to the appropriate County departments for action or Advisory Board Committee and tracked by the Regional Service Center director.

The Board also holds two public forums:
-The Operating Budget Forum every January
-The Capital Improvement Projects Budget Forum every two years in June.

Vacancies on the Board are broadly advertised. Members are nominated by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council to serve 3-year terms.

The Board has two committees: one that focuses on land use, zoning and transportation; and the other on quality of life and county budget matters.

To bring an issue to the Board's attention or for more information on Board activities or vacancies please call 240-777-8100 or email to: midcty.citizen@montgomerycountymd.gov. You can also visit their website at <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/midcounty/boards/mccabindex.html> or follow their blog postings at: <http://mccabblog.blogspot.com>

Wheaton Urban District

Role of the Wheaton Urban District

The Wheaton Urban District provides special services to the Central Business District to ensure that downtown Wheaton is maintained in a clean, safe and attractive manner to promote a vibrant social and business environment and long-term economic viability and vitality—a map of the full coverage area can be found in Appendix B. These services include security, streetscape maintenance, tree maintenance, sidewalk repairs, marketing, and events.

Clean and Safe Team

Take a walk through downtown Wheaton and you will see a variety of “special touches” provided by our dedicated team of Urban District staff. The Clean and Safe teams (recognizable by their red shirts) provide landscaping, maintenance and concierge services to the businesses and patrons in the Urban District. Their goal is to make Wheaton a better place to live, visit, and do business by improving the appearance of the downtown and fostering a safe and inviting environment.

Clean and Safe Team Members:

- Patrol downtown Wheaton to ensure a clean and safe environment
- Offer 'buddy' escorts to and from parked vehicles and other locations
- Provide information and directions
- Administer emergency First Aid & CPR
- Respond to emergency situations and contact the appropriate agencies
- Provide jump starts and vehicle assistance
- Maintain landscaping and planters
- Clear sidewalks of snow and debris
- Remove building graffiti

Clean Team members are available Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 3:30 pm. Safe Team Members are available Monday through Saturday 1:00 pm to 11:30 pm and Sunday 10:00 am to 8:30 pm.

Contacting the Wheaton Urban District

To contact the Clean and safe Team during operational hours, call: 240-777-8120. You may contact other Wheaton Urban District staff by going to

<http://www.wheatonmd.org/contact-us/staff-listing>. They are located in downtown Wheaton at 2424 Reedy Drive, 20902. Please visit their website at www.wheatonmd.org for more information, calendar and news.



Wheaton Urban District Newsletter

The Wheaton Urban District offers a quarterly e-newsletter that provides Wheaton specific information to subscribers. To subscribe, go to: <http://www.wheatonmd.org/subscribe>

- Enter you email address and then press **Submit**.

Follow the Wheaton Urban District on Social Media

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WheatonMD?ref=mf>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WheatonMD>

Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/85502002@No6/>

For more information as to what is happening in the Wheaton Urban District, please visit www.wheatonmd.org.

Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) consists of 11 members to provide advice on all matters affecting the Wheaton Urban District area (downtown). Members represent businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, residents, and the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB).

Vacancies on the Committee are broadly advertised. Members are nominated by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council to serve 3-year terms.

WUDAC Community Concerns

At the beginning of each of its meetings, the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee invites the community to present any concerns it may have.

Issues raised by community members are sent to the appropriate County departments for action or Advisory Board Committee and tracked by the Regional Service Center staff.

There are two subcommittees including the Design subcommittee which addresses issues of greening, beautification, lighting, streetscapes and facades. The second subcommittee is the Economic Development subcommittee that addresses issues related to businesses and the arts & entertainment district.

To bring an issue to the Committee's attention or for more information on the Committee's activities or vacancies please call 240-777-8100 or email to: wudac@montgomerycountymd.gov. You can also visit their website at <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/midcounty/boards/wudacindex.html> or follow their blog postings at: <http://wudacblog.blogspot.com/>



What is a Community Association?

A community association is a group of individuals with shared interests who meet regularly to accomplish common goals. An association may include homeowners, renters, apartment residents, business owners, school parents, religious congregations, parents and other caregivers, and members of non-profit organizations. Community associations include homeowners, citizens, or neighborhood associations.

Many community associations in Montgomery County are also referred to as civic associations. To view the list of all civic associations in the Mid-County area, please go to Appendix C.

What are the benefits of having an association?

Community associations:

- **Foster a sense of identity.** A sense of common identity among members can be established and maintained through a range of activities including networking, social events, advocacy and volunteerism.
- **Facilitate communication.** Information can also be provided efficiently to a greater number of neighbors, resulting in a benefit to the community as a whole. Meetings provide opportunities for members to discuss issues and work toward resolving problems.
- **Build relationships.** A community association is one of the best ways to build relationships between neighbors. Association meetings provide an opportunity to get to know your neighbor through social activities. Building relationships helps neighbors become familiar with each other's needs, interests and become more supportive in problem solving.
- **Create an organized, unified voice.** Through a community association your neighborhood has a unified voice in County government and helps with identifying issues, creating partnerships and setting priorities. County services can often be provided to your community more efficiently through an association.
- **Improve neighborhoods.** Residents of your community can work through the community association and County staff to develop long range beautification and improvement projects.



Getting to Know Your Community

Know Your Neighborhood

An important part of developing a community association is first knowing who is a part of your community. Every community is different and depending on the demographics will vary as to who gets involved. This information should assist you in developing strategies for communication, outreach, and community building.

The Mid-County Regional Services Center can help you locate information about your community especially as it pertains to existing efforts by residents, existing groups, or any other related information. To find demographic or other related resources, please try one of the following resources:

- **Board of Elections** – which includes voting districts, information about elected officials: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections
- **GIS Maps** – disseminates **maps**, spatial **data**, information, and **publications**: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/gis
- **Master Plans** – each community has a master plan that creates a comprehensive view of land use trends and future development: www.montgomeryplanning.org/
- **Parks** - www.montgomeryparks.org/
- **My Montgomery** – locate county services near you: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mymontgomery

Take a Survey

Use a survey to identify neighborhood issues and allow for feedback for your association meetings. Following are the two most common methods of conducting a written Neighborhood Survey. Method I takes more time initially from the survey takers, but it is more thorough and will return more reliable results. Method II relies on the neighbors to take the initiative to fill out the forms. While it is not necessary (and in reality, almost impossible) to retrieve a form from each resident in a neighborhood, your efforts will be most effective the more input you receive from residents.

Method I

1. Gather 2-4 neighbors together and distribute pencils, survey and clipboards.
2. Assign each person to a particular section of the neighborhood. You may not be able to cover the entire neighborhood in one day and usually, Saturday or Sunday afternoons is best to reach people. For that reason, you may want to spread your effort over a few weeks.
3. Survey takers should knock on every door, introduce themselves, explain why they are there, ask the resident to complete the survey, then note the address on the form and go to the next door.
4. Keep a list of addresses where no one was home or the people did not have the time to complete the survey and return the next day or week.

Method II

1. Gather 2-4 neighbors together to distribute survey sheets to homes in the community. The survey sheets will indicate when the survey takers will return to collect forms.
2. Assign each person to a particular section of the neighborhood. You may not be able to cover the entire neighborhood in one day—Saturday or Sunday afternoons are best. You may want to spread your effort over a few weeks.
3. Survey takers should return on the date indicated to retrieve the surveys. (They will find that most doors do not have the sheets reattached to the doors, so they will need to knock on each door and probably return a second or third time to retrieve the forms).

Online Surveys

You may also consider an Internet survey. Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>) is an excellent recourse to design and deliver an on-line survey.

Developing an Association

Get Organized

When possible, reach out to existing groups who may have similar goals or represent the same community. The Mid-County Regional Services Center can help identify groups in your area.

These groups can offer the opportunity for a range of partnerships through their existing structure and resources. You may be the catalyst that helps a struggling or dormant organization become more relevant and responsive to the needs of its membership.

If there are no existing community organizations or you decide to form a group more closely tailored to your specific goals, begin by identifying two or three willing to join.

The organization committee can help with:

- Selecting an interim group leader;
- Suggesting topics for agenda/goals of the organization;
- Establishing a place and time for meetings such as a centrally located home, community center, or school and a time during the week that works best, usually after dinner; and
- Setting tentative geographic boundaries and a name for your organization.

Set Goals

All organizations must carefully and clearly define their goals. A list of goals is a simple, but important, statement of the organization's purpose. Goals should be specific, measurable, realistic, tangible and, most importantly, achievable. Remember to keep initial goals flexible enough to change as your membership grows.

Goals for a community association may include:

- Helping individuals get to know each other by holding social events
- Organizing issues or educational workshops
- Advocating for a local ordinance or project
- Improving the community through neighborhood clean-up days and volunteer activities
- Raising funds for a community project
- Forming a Neighborhood Watch to reduce crime.

Spread the Word

Nothing gets the word out better than personal contact. Techniques for getting the word out include:

- Distributing flyers;
- Talking to neighbors one-on-one, and if possible, informally survey them about wants, needs, and concerns;
- Posting signs at key exits to the neighborhood and at activity centers; and
- Identifying other prospective leaders and getting them involved.

Your First Meeting

The purpose of the first meeting is to introduce the fledgling association to your neighbors. The format should motivate the community not just to attend, but to encourage continued involvement.

Some ideas for a first meeting include:

- **Invite a well known speaker.** Local elected or appointed officials are always good choices. Other speakers could include a local author or a media personality.
- **Provide food.** A summer cookout is a family-friendly option. Choose a nearby park, or at mid-block.
- **Discuss a current problem.** Nothing motivates better than crisis. Make sure that you've invited partners likely to help you resolve the problem.
- **Provide language interpretation.** This may help draw in members of your community that speak other languages and/or whose first language is not English.

First Meeting Do's and Don'ts

- DO provide name-tags to help new residents get to know each other
- DO keep the agenda light and focused on relationship building
- DO focus on identifying issues of concern
- DO ask for volunteers to research issues and report back
- DO emphasize the value of organization vs. individual action
- DON'T forget to offer food and provide a pleasant atmosphere
- DON'T cast the meeting as a debate or vote on particular solutions.
- DON'T get bogged down in conflicts between individuals.

Developing Leadership

Recruit Leaders

Identifying and developing neighborhood leaders will help spread the workload and provide continuity over time. People in leadership positions are responsible for coordinating the activities of a group, including activities designed to help the group achieve goals and feel good about working together.

A leadership position within a community association is a serious commitment. A leader:

- Impacts the association and the neighborhood;
- Possesses the organization's vision and the ability to build consensus;
- Delegates duties and authority to others;
- Encourages neighbor involvement and maximizes talent;
- Helps the association cultivate future leaders; and
- Recognizes the value in rotating leadership among members.

The task of recruiting and developing leaders is an ongoing activity for all members of the community association. Sometimes leaders are reluctant to share authority or delegate responsibility. Part of being a good leader is helping others grow into leadership roles.

Developing Effective Leaders

- Search for many potential leaders, not just one or two.
- Encourage people to switch tasks and discover their strengths.
- Remind members to be open to change and bring in new members and leaders.
- Encourage positive and productive communication.
- Delegate responsibility by matching members' individual needs and strengths with the needs of the group.
- Break big jobs into small parts and assign to different people.
- Focus on goals and achievements, not personalities.

Job Descriptions

The following are key leadership positions typically found in neighborhood associations. Together they make up the "Executive Committee" of an association.

President:

- Serves as chief executive officer of the association
- Assumes general responsibility for the day-to-day administration of the association
- Presides at all meetings
- Reserves the authority to authorize specific actions in promoting the association's policies

Vice President:

- Performs the duties of the President in the absence of the President
- Serves on the association executive committee
- Coordinates committee chairpersons and reports status to the association
- Assumes duties as defined by the President

Secretary:

- Maintains the records of the association
- Takes minutes of meetings and keeps a permanent and accurate record of the association discussions and actions
- Receives and handles all correspondence addressed to the association

Treasurer:

- Keeps accounts of all expenses
- Makes payments upon authorization of the Executive Committee
- Collects membership dues
- Presents a written report each month to the Executive Committee and/or general membership

Membership

Keep Members Interested

It is easy to attract new members in times of crisis. Hot button issues energize the neighborhood, particularly if residents feel their property values or quality of life is threatened. However, after the publicity dies away and the problem is resolved, active members may disappear. It is considerably more difficult to sustain interest during mundane times.

Keeping the interest and involvement of association members is an ongoing challenge in every neighborhood. Here are some pointers and ideas that hopefully will stimulate your thinking.

Here are some helpful hints to maintaining interest:

- **Be realistic in your expectations of the members.** Many neighbors have other priorities that may limit participation.
- **Stay focused on a few well-defined goals or projects.**
- **Regularly check that meeting times, locations and meeting lengths are convenient for members.**
- **Celebrate each success.**
- **Ask individual neighbors for help or their involvement.** Sometimes a personal invitation to help is most effective. A person may be willing if asked, but may not volunteer or speak up in a group setting.
- **Find out what is important to your members** and get them involved in committees or projects involving their interest.
- **Make sure to welcome new neighbors.** Establish a welcoming committee that visits or calls each new resident.
- **Organize regular social functions** to encourage a sense of community.
- **Sponsor clean-up days**, taking one street at a time so that the work seems manageable and can be accomplished in the morning.
- **Create a telephone or texting tree, listserv or other communication system.**
- **Recognize volunteers** by thanking each individual at a general meeting; acknowledging someone's efforts in your newsletter; or ask neighbors to cook dinner or bake a cake/cookies for someone.
- **Follow up** on issues brought to the association for resolution.

Hold Social Events

One feature of more successful community associations is to offer a range of activities. They do so by staying in touch with neighbors' individual needs. Not everyone is an activist. Some of your residents may be motivated by an opportunity to socialize, such as an event on a national holiday.

Consider combining social events with social responsibility by including food drives, or raffles that benefit local charities.

Other ideas for building community include organizing:

- ***A community yard sale***
- ***Used book sale***
- ***Yard beautification contest***
- ***Community association logo contest***
- ***A block party***
- ***Cultural events***

Undertake a Membership Drive

Don't inadvertently restrict your numbers by having membership forms and sign up sheets only at meetings. In order to maximize your membership potential, be everywhere your neighbors are.

- ***Have volunteers go door to door.*** This can be a week-long effort or one-day blitz. Consider having a membership drive and then sponsoring a party that same day for volunteers to have fun and share experiences.
- ***Arm volunteers with printed materials.*** This can be a simple letter from the group's President that explains your neighborhood organization along with details of upcoming activities. Materials may also include information on municipal services and programs available in the area. Also, volunteers should carry membership forms with them and offer both immediate and mail-in membership opportunities.
- ***Develop a block leader network.*** Block leaders can pass out flyers and newsletters, welcome new residents, serve as a conduit for specific problems on the block, and place volunteers in activities. Work with organized Block Watches to promote safety within your community.
- ***Members can also be found at community gatherings.*** Sponsor a booth at a community festival or event. This is a great opportunity to talk to people in your area. Remember to have information and membership sign-up sheets at your booth.

Communication

Best Practices in Reaching Out

Meetings are necessary to discuss issues, plan strategies, and follow up on efforts. In order to draw people to attend, outreach is conducted to reach all groups in each community. Reaching your audience will be a challenge for the entire organization. Therefore, it is important to try a variety of strategies to reach people. Here are some ideas for accomplishing this:

Provide a Personal Touch

- **Block/Apartment Captains.** Many civic groups use block captains as an opportunity to breakdown neighborhoods into more feasible areas for outreach and/or distribution of information. For example, often a printed newsletter is distributed by a block captain to his/her neighbors. This helps create bridges with just one person on their block instead of a large group of people at a meeting.
- **Provide opportunity for dialogue.** Meetings can be difficult forums for people to connect, especially if there is little opportunity for dialogue. It is important to provide opportunity for attendees to be part of the meeting—starting with introductions, to asking them to weigh in on issues, or having comment cards for feedback.
- **Share Stories.** Issues in a community often are a problem for one group but may mean little to another. Numbers and statistics helps shed some light but may not gain backing or empathy that is sought. Stories on the other hand, give meaning to numbers, to the problems posed by a group. Stories create a point of empathy often leading to meaningful dialogues. They help bring down barriers that allow for others to be vulnerable and ask questions.

Going Online!

Create an organization email address:
www.mail.love.com or
<http://mail.google.com/mail/help/open.html>

Reserve a domain name:
<https://wordpress.com/>
<http://www.weebly.com/>
www.google.com/sites/

Consider a blog:
<https://www.blogger.com/start2>
<http://home.spaces.live.com/>

Social networking site:
<http://twitter.com/>

Create a website — Examples:
<http://www.goca.org/>
<http://www.maplewoodcitizens.org>

Community Events

- **Working side by side.** Projects offer residents opportunities to start a conversation with others they may have seen at meetings or walking down the street. It allows people to come together around a shared interest, which is important to work through perceived and real barriers. This can be achieved through the following:
 - Conducting neighborhood surveys

- Staffing booths at local events
- Hosting coffees or other social events
- Join efforts with adjoining neighborhoods
- Send speakers to business groups, service clubs, schools or churches
- Develop community service projects

Keep People Informed

- ✓ Community Newsletter – for examples, see www.kensingtonheightsweb.com/association/cahome.cfm and www.norbeckhills.org/nhnews.html
- ✓ Ads in school, religious congregation, and club newsletters
- ✓ Bulletins, notices, pamphlets and posters
- ✓ As much as possible, translate materials to common languages spoken in the community

Connecting with Non-English Speakers

Here are a couple of strategies to assist with connecting with non-english speakers in your community:

- **Obtaining interpretation**

Wherever possible, make room in the budget for a professional interpreter. For bilingual community members, it may be cost effective to invest in community interpretation training in exchange for providing language support at meetings for a set amount of time.

- **Avoid asking children to interpret**

People often turn to children to interpret for parents. Many experts agree that this places the child in a precarious position, often resulting in a shift in power dynamics within the family. Even if the child often acts as an interpreter, it is preferable to find someone else to translate especially since children may not have the emotional or linguistic capacity to effectively communicate information.

- **Do your research**

Find out where people are from, research cultures, learn a couple of words, and look up customs particularly when it comes to practices of faith. What you learn may not be universal and/or applicable to your neighbors, but it will help you in asking questions and/or understanding practices that may feel unfamiliar. For example, in some cultures, it is not customary to look at someone when speaking. It is a sign of respect and yet in our culture, it is a sign of disrespect. These differences can improve an encounter with a neighbor and/or the opportunity to build a relationship. Over time, you may be able to ask valuable information including what works in reaching out to others from their cultural group. Prospective members will appreciate the effort and will often feel that your community is welcoming to them and their family.

Rules and Regulations

Establish Rules

The fundamental purposes of community associations are to provide a basis for protecting members' equity in the community and a framework within which people can make decisions.

Specific purposes of rules and regulations include:

- Enforcing the community's bylaws and policies in a fair and diplomatic way;
- Protecting, enhancing and promoting the purposes of the association as stated in the legal documents;
- Restricting and governing the use of the common areas and amenities;
- Establishing architectural guidelines and controls for aesthetic value;
- Establishing rules for the use of facilities by owners, guests and tenants;
- Amplifying, expanding, clarifying and interpreting the broad restrictions in the association's governing documents;
- Protecting and preserving the property and assets of the association and the owners.

Draft By-laws

The following are “bare-bones” bylaws to help you get started. Each community will undoubtedly have its own approach; the following is a suggestion only.

Article I – Name

The parties involved shall choose the name of the organization.

Article II – Purpose

The purpose of this organization is to achieve and maintain decent and wholesome living conditions in Montgomery County, Maryland; assist persons living in the specific neighborhood to work together for the good of their neighborhood; and provide a non-partisan organization which will benefit this neighborhood and this County through worthwhile programs.

Article III – Membership

Section 1. Membership in this organization shall be open only to persons who reside or own property in the neighborhood boundaries.

Section 2. The neighborhood boundaries are the interior of the streets that border the neighborhood.

Section 3. The organization may enroll honorary members, but these members may not vote on matters before this organization.

Article IV – Annual Meetings

During the first meeting of the calendar year, a meeting of this organization shall be convened for the purpose of electing officers. This meeting shall also be a regular meeting of the organization for other business.

Article V – Officers

Section 1. The officers of the neighborhood organization shall consist of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Section 2. The officers shall be elected at the first annual meeting from a slate prepared by the Nominating Committee, as well as from any additional nominations from the floor. The persons receiving the highest number of votes for each office shall be elected. Those elected shall serve until the next election.

Section 3. No officer shall serve more than three (3) consecutive terms in the same office. A term is one year.

Section 4. In case of a vacancy in office other than that of President, the vacancy shall be filled by election at a subsequent regular meeting of the organization.

Section 5. Officers may be removed for cause, including violation of the by-laws or dereliction of duty, by a majority of two-thirds of the votes at a regular meeting of the organization, provided that the officer to be removed has been notified in writing of the proposed removal at least thirty (30) days before the meeting.

Article VI – Duties of Officers

Section 1. The President is the chief executive officer of the organization. The duties of the President shall be to preside over all meetings of the organization, to call special meetings, to appoint committee chairpersons and to be or appoint the spokesperson for the organization to local government, the press, or other community associations.

Section 2. The duties of the Vice President shall be to serve as chief executive officer and preside over all meetings in the absence of the President, coordinate committee chairpersons and report status to the board and to succeed to the office of President in the event of a vacancy in that position.

Section 3. The duties of the Treasurer shall be to keep accounts of all expenses, collect membership dues, and to make regular reports of the organization's financial status.

Section 4. The duties of the Secretary shall be to maintain the records of the organization, keep accurate minutes for all meetings, receive and handle all correspondence addressed to the organization.

Article VII – Meetings

Section 1. The regular meeting of the organization shall be held monthly. The time and place are to be designated by the President.

Section 2. Special meetings may be called by the President or by petition of ten (10) or more members. Such meetings may act on any business proper to the

organization, provided that written notice of the meeting has gone out to all members at least ten (10) days before the meeting date.

Article VIII – Committees and Programs

Section 1. Committees and programs of this organization shall be established by majority vote of members present at a meeting of the organization.

Section 2. Committee members and chairpersons shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the President.

Article IX – Procedure

Unless the meeting has adopted some other procedure, all meetings of this organization are governed by guidelines of [Roberts Rules of Order](#).

Article X – Amendments

The by-laws of this organization may be amended at any meeting, provided that the proposed amendments have been sent to all members prior to the meeting at which they are to be considered.

After ratification by membership, by-laws are signed by the association president, vice president, and secretary.

Budgets

Set Fees

Community associations often charge fees to their membership. Depending on the association, the assessments may be paid monthly, quarterly, or annually. When determining fee amount, keep in mind that fees can be a barrier to participation for some in your community.

At a minimum, fees should cover such costs as:

- Printing materials
- Website hosting
- Food and drinks for meetings
- Room rentals
- Insurance

Some associations offer expanded services to their communities. These fees may be optional to those who opt to receive them. Expanded services can include:

- Landscape and maintenance of common areas
- Social Activities
- Security patrols
- Fees for amenities (pool, tennis court, golf course, exercise room, etc...)

Tips for the Treasurer

Open an account with a local bank.

Hire an accountant to audit finances annually.

Require a second signature to act as a security measure and prevent fraud.

Determine fees/dues, based on actual needs.

Report on the Budget

An annual budget report is usually approved at the annual meeting of the association and clearly identifies itemized expenses and income for the prior year. Many associations distribute the annual budget of the association and make it available through the Treasurer of the association, as required by the by-laws.

Raise Funds

Steps to Success

1. Set a fundraising goal.
2. Watch for hidden costs.
3. Give yourself and your group time to prepare.
4. Set up specific timeframes and stick to them.
5. Conduct fewer and more effective programs.
6. Stay motivated throughout the program by focusing on your goal.
7. Communicate clearly with all parties involved in the fundraiser before, during and after the program.
8. Recruit volunteers ahead of time.
9. Have fun!

File for 501(c)4 Tax-Exempt Status

A community association should consider tax-exempt status by filing for 501(c)4 status with the IRS. To be eligible, a civic organization must be operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare and not organized for profit. Unlike 501(c)3 status, which is talked about next, an 501(c)4 organization may be politically active. Also, contributions to a 501(c)4 are not deductible.

The following are excellent online resources for learning more about 501(c)4 status:

<http://www.irs.gov/charities/nonprofits/article/0,,id=96178,00.html>

http://nonprofitmanagement.suite101.com/article.cfm/what_is_a_501c4_organization

Consider 501(c)3 Tax-Exempt Status

A key reason communities choose to establish a 501(c)3 is to create a foundation for raising money for a community improvement project or charitable activity such as:

- Purchasing recreation center improvements/equipment
- Funding an aging-in-place initiative
- Establishing a local school foundation

Local bar associations may be able to direct associations to "pro bono" or reduced-cost legal services from lawyers experienced in the non-profit sector. In Montgomery County, contact the Maryland Bar Foundation Pro Bono Program at 301-424-7651, if you are looking for assistance. Their address is: 27 West Jefferson Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Online resources for 501(c)3 requirements and forms may be found at:

<http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html>

Meetings

Conduct Regular Meetings

It is up to you to determine whether it makes sense to hold meetings annually, quarterly or monthly. Your community's goals should help in this determination. Regular and predictable meetings will help your association and membership stay involved and focused on the organization's goals.

Conduct Successful Meetings

Your conduct of association meetings matters. Efficient and organized meetings will help attract participants and keep them engaged.

The following is a checklist to foster a positive meeting:

- *Select a neutral place to meet, such as a school or library meeting room, Mid-County Regional Service Center, or a local restaurant.*
- *Prepare and post an agenda*
- *Clearly state the purpose of your meeting on the agenda*
- *Start and end on time*
- *Keep the meeting moving*
- *Provide time for introductions*
- *Encourage participation*
- *Summarize the conversation frequently*
- *Stress cooperation, not conflict*
- *Summarize decisions reached*
- *Point out differences not yet resolved*
- *State ideas positively and show their relation to the overall issue*
- *Use consistent rules – such as Roberts Rules of Order – to add structure to deliberations*
- *Outline future actions and get commitments for follow through*
- *Set the next meeting date, time and place.*

Tips

Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the Board.

Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

For more information about Roberts Rules online, visit:
www.robertsrules.org.

When you find yourself chairing or facilitating a community meeting, the ability to express yourself in a clear and concise manner is important. Listening, however, can be even more important. Both speaking and listening are skills that everyone involved in the group should master, especially those in leadership positions.

Speak Effectively

The most respected members of a group are often the best speakers. They are able to get an idea across to a group of people without dominating the meeting or rambling.

Here are tips to help improve your speaking ability:

- **Know what you want to say.** Outline your main points on a piece of paper before you speak. Use the outline as a guide to help you be more focused.
- **Keep it short and to the point.**
- **Speak clearly and project your voice outward.**
- **Practice your speech.** Try practicing your presentation in front of a mirror at home.
- **Be Concise.** Focus on one or two central ideas in your speech.
- **Make eye contact with the audience.**
- **Avoid distractions.** Avoid words like “um,” “ah,” “kinda” and “you know”. Also avoid playing with your hair or glasses or jingling your keys.

Listen to Others

A successful community leader works at listening to other individual's concerns. They focus on not just the words being spoken, but what those words mean. This skill takes practice and hard work. The guidelines below may help you to improve your listening skills:

- **Listen for the unfamiliar.**
- **Rephrase important points in your own words.** This will allow the speaker to clarify the statement if there has been a misunderstanding.
- **Pay attention to details.** Details are important in communication, especially if the membership differs significantly on the issue.
- **Be open minded about new ideas and opinions.**
- **Allow speakers to complete their ideas or opinions without interruption.**
- **If you are not clear on terms being used, ask the speaker to define them.**

Practice Active Listening

Active listening is making a conscious effort to hear, analyze, assign meaning to and respond to what another person is saying. Successful active listening can be exhausting, but will help build confidence that you care about what's important to your members.

Steps to becoming an effective active listener include:

- **Focus on the Speaker.** Establish and keep eye and face contact with the speaker. Reinforce what is being said or understood through non-verbal facial expressions.
- **Use Receptive Language.** Follow and encourage the speaker's train of thought by using receptive language; e.g., "I see," "Hmmm," "Un huh," etc.
- **Listen for Key Words.** It takes continuous action to focus on the essence of the information being shared. The listener's mind should be actively gathering, sorting, sifting, evaluating, synthesizing, and ordering the data.
- **Respond.** Verify with the speaker about the essence of what was said, especially if the thought is being captured on a flipchart or electronically for future reference. Ask questions for clarity but be cautious that the questions are not leading. Never, unless expressly requested, give an opinion on the presented information.

Consensus

Build Consensus

The goal of consensus building is to get individuals who hold different views on an issue to share information and negotiate to arrive at a mutually acceptable course of action.

Consensus is not always possible in every situation but is a desirable goal, particularly in communities. A majority vote does not represent a consensus.

Begin building consensus by asking each individual for their opinion. For consensus to work, each should be willing to accept less than everything they want in order to help the association toward its goal.

Keep in mind the following tips to help your community reach consensus:

- **Rank problems and/or solutions.**
- **Brainstorm** to help generate ideas in a short period of time.
- **Encourage interaction** in meetings, which may result in a consensus.
- **Use negotiation techniques.**
- **Create a focus group.** Members of this group will help describe the problem or define others' perception.

The National Parks Service has an excellent resource for consensus building available on their website. You can find some of the following information and other useful tools at: www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoobox/index_comtoolbox.htm.

Use Brainstorming Tools

- **Basic Technique:** Break into small groups (15 people or less). Arrange chairs in a circle to allow everyone to see each other. Set aside a specific amount of time. Describe questions that the group will respond to and check for understanding. Request that individuals not discuss the merits of each idea until all ideas have been recorded. Write down all ideas on a flip chart. Print large, legibly and fast. Repeat back key words and phrases and be sure to ask the speaker to clarify ideas you do not understand. Build on and expand ideas. Push the group to consider other ways of looking at the issue in order to stimulate more ideas.
- **Silent Thinking and Writing:** Present a question or statement and ask individuals to spend 5 to 15 minutes reflecting, and then writing down their responses. Responses can either be handed in and a facilitator reads them to the group. Consider asking each individual to share if there are individuals who seem quiet or reluctant to speak.
- **Round Robin:** Ask each individual in turn to share one idea at a time until either there are no more ideas or the time limit is reached. Try reversing the direction of calling on people.
- **Popcorn:** Ideas are called out randomly and quickly.

- 
- **Discussion Brainstorm:** Have a discussion about the question or issue for a specific amount of time, say 5 to 10 minutes. Then run the brainstorm, describing key ideas that came up.
 - **Sticky Notes:** Each individual is given 5 minutes to think about a response to the question or issue. As an alternative, pair individuals up to generate ideas. Individuals or pairs are asked to record their responses on as many sticky notes as necessary. The sticky notes are then given to the facilitator who reads them and sticks them on the wall or a flip chart. Similar ideas are then grouped.
 - **Reverse Brainstorming:** The first half of this technique is identical to Basic Technique. Once that exercise is over, re-state the question as its total opposite as a “worst case” question. Begin brainstorming again using the mirror image question. This time, after the answers are recorded, the facilitator “flips” each answer to its opposite. The answers from both exercises are then combined.

Conflict

Manage Conflict

Conflict can be daunting for a community association to address. Conflicts between neighbors can be particularly uncomfortable. Some community associations make it a point to avoid issues that split the community and pit neighbor against neighbor.

It is important that any conflict is addressed immediately to prevent damage to personal relationships. Disagreements among association members can be an opportunity for growth, change and new understanding.

Many disagreements can be resolved with mediation. A few suggestions to help manage conflict include:

- **Talk directly to one another, face to face.** Direct conversation is more effective than sending a letter or complaining to someone else.
- **Choose the right time and place to talk.** Find a neutral place where you can both talk undisturbed for as long as it takes. Approach the other person and ask if you can set up a convenient time to talk.
- **Don't blame or call names.** If you make the other person angry, they are less likely to be calm with you.
- **Listen to the other person.** Give them a chance to tell their side of the story completely. Although you may not agree with what is being said, show that you are listening by saying you hear what they are saying and that you are glad you are discussing the problem together.
- **Negotiate a solution.** Ask "What can we do to improve the situation for both of us?" or "What can we do to resolve our differences?"
- **Check back with each other.** Ask the other person "Is this working for you?"

Need Help Resolving Conflict?

Consider contacting:

Mid-County Regional Services Center,
240-777-8100

Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery
County, 301-942-7700

Addressing Issues in Your Community

Issues emerge in every community, hence it is important to know the steps to address your concerns. If the concerns relate to county services, it is important to first document the concern by calling 311.

311 is Montgomery County's phone number for non-emergency government information and services. For emergency calls, residents should continue to call 911. Complaints and service requests can also be completed online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/311.

If concerns are not being addressed, the following resources are available to you:

Contact the Mid-County Regional Services Director: They can assist you in finding the right contact and/or information related to your concern especially as it pertains to county departments that should be involved in addressing the issue at hand.

Contact your elected official: both your district and at-large councilmembers are available to listen and understand your concerns. They will forward your information to county departments involved.

Filing an individual complaint with the appropriate department: if you know specifically who to contact, please go to the county website to find that department and file a complaint. Many departments have a complaint or concern feature on their websites to list a complaint either confidentially or anonymously.

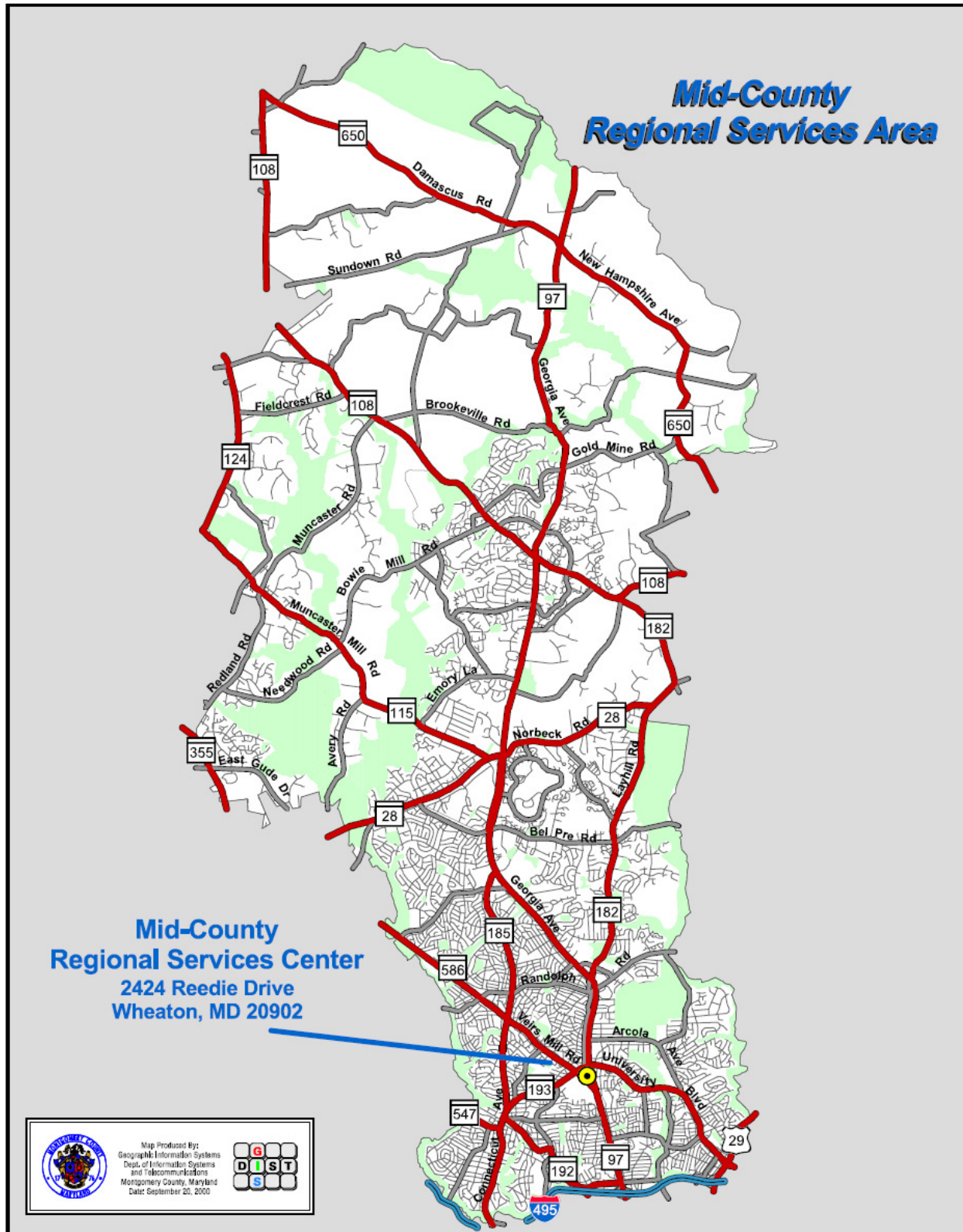
Acknowledgments

Below is a list of resources utilized to create this toolkit:

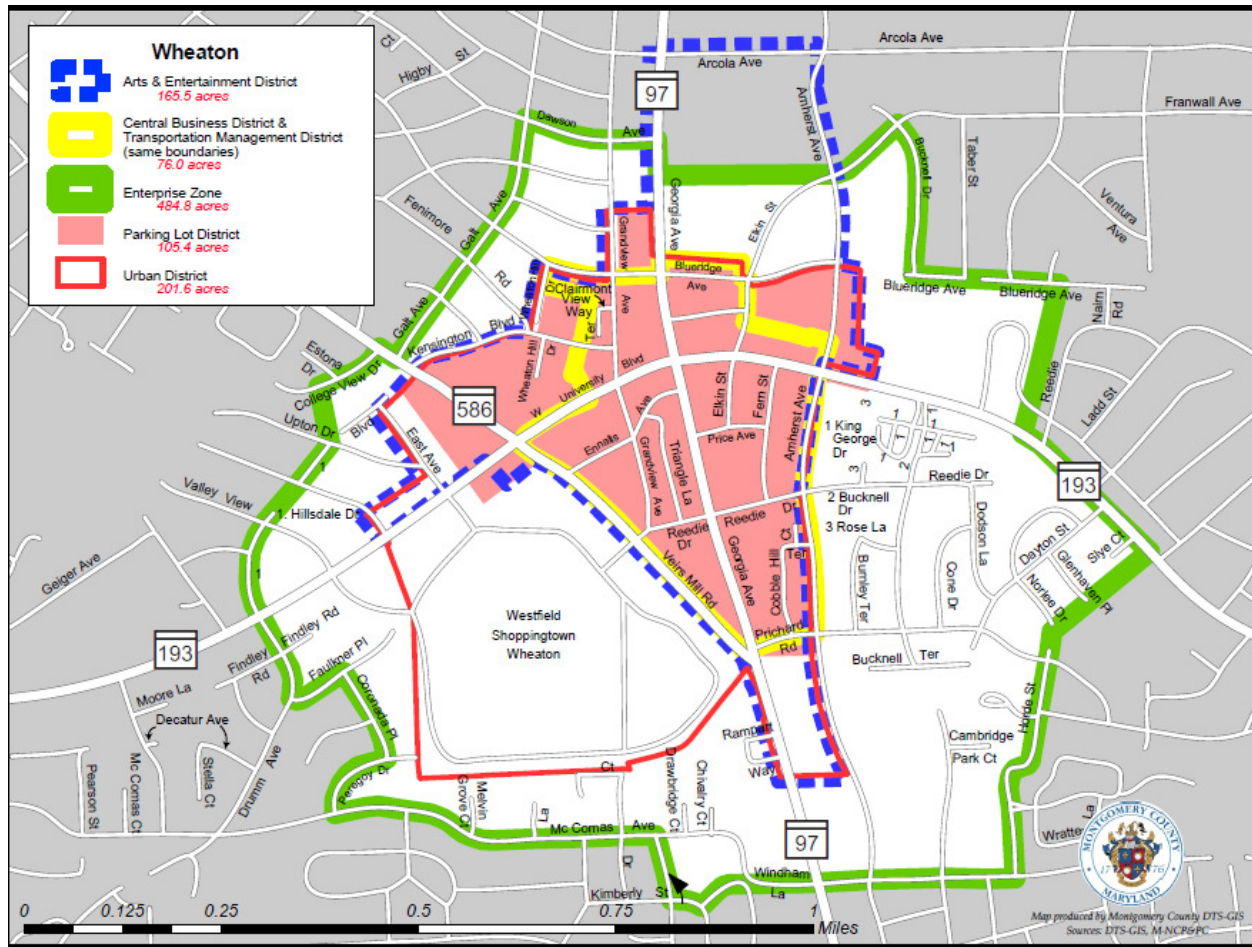
- **“An Introduction to Community Association Living”**, Center for Community Association Volunteers
- **“Neighborhood Association Toolkit”**, City of Henderson, NV, Neighborhood Services
- **“Neighborhood Organizing Toolkit”**, City of Riverside, CA, Office of Neighborhoods
- **“Neighborhood Organization Toolkit”**, City of Cedar Hill, TX
- **“Robert's Rules of Order - Summary Version”**, © 1997 Beverly Kennedy
www.robertsrules.org
- **“Community Tool Box”**, National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. (www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoobox/index_comtoolbox.htm).

Special thanks to Kenneth Hartman, Director, Bethesda- Chevy-Chase Regional Services Center for developing the framework for this toolkit.

Appendix A: Map of Mid-County



Appendix B: Wheaton Urban District Map



Appendix C: List of Civic Associations in Mid-County (please contact 240-777-8104 to provide updates, changes, additions and deletions of civic groups)

AREA	CIVIC ASSOCIATION
ASPEN HILL	ASPEN HILL CIVIC ASSN.
	CONNETICUT AVE-GREENWOOD KNOLLS ASSN.
	GEORGIAN FOREST CITIZEN ASSN.
	LAYHILL CIVIC ASSN.
	LAYHILL SOUTH CITIZENS ASSN
	LAYHILL VIEW CITIZENS ASSN.
	LAYHILL VILLAGE EAST CITIZENS ASSN.
	WILTON OAKS CIVIC ASSN.
BROOKEVILLE	OLNEY VILLAGE CITIZENS ASSN.
	UNITY CITIZENS ASSN.
	UNITY/SUNSHINE ASSN.
KENSINGTON	BYEFORDE-ROCK CREEK HIGHLANDS
	COALITION OF KENSINGTON COMMUNITIES
	GARRETT PARK CITIZENS ASSN.
	KEN-GAR CIVIC ASSN.
	KENSINGTON HEIGHTS CITIZENS ASSN.
	KENSINGTON HEIGHTS CIVIC ASSN.
	KENSINGTON TERRACE CITIZENS GROUP
	KENSINGTON VIEW CITIZENS ASSN.
	KENSINGTON VIEW CIVIC ASSN.
	ROCK CREEK HILL CITIZENS ASSN.
	ROCK CREEK MANOR CITIZEN ASSN.
	ROCK CREEK PALISADES CITIZENS
	WEST KENSINGTON CIVIC ASSN.
LAYTONSVILLE	BELL CHASE CIVIC ASSN.
	FAIRHILL-RIGGS ROAD CIVIC ASSN.
	GOSHEN COMMUNITY ASSN.
	GREATER LAYTONSVILLE AREA CITIZENS
	PERSPECTIVE WOOD CITIZENS ASSN.
	STANBROOK LANE CITIZENS ASSN.
	WILDCAT COMMUNITY CITIZENS ASSN.
OLNEY	BRIARS ACRES COMMUNITY ASSN.
	EMORY NORBROOK ASCOTT COMM. ACTN NTWK
	GREATER OLNEY CITIZENS ASSN.
	HIGHLANDS OF OLNEY CIVIC ASSN.
	NORBECK GROVE COMMUNITY ASSN.
	OLNEY ACRES CIVIC ASSN.
	OLNEY SQUARE CITIZENS ASSN.

	SOUTHEAST RURAL OLNEY CIVIC ASSN.
	WILLIAMSBURG VILLAGE CIVIC ASSN.
ROCKVILLE	BEL PRE SQUARE CITIZENS ASSN.
	BOWIE MILL CIVIC ASSN.
	CASHELL ESTATES COMMUNITY ASSN.
	HUNTER'S RUN CIVIC ASSN.
	LAKE NEEDWOOD CITIZENS ASSN.
	LAUGHLIN LANE CIVIC ASSN.
	MUNCASTER AREA CIVIC ASSN.
	NEEDWOOD ROAD CITIZENS ASSN.
	NORBECK MEADOWS CIVIC ASSN.
	NORTH CREEK CIVIC ASSN.
	NORWOOD VILLAGE CITIZENS/CIVIC ASSN.
	STONEBROOK CIVIC ASSN.
	SYCAMORE ACRES CITIZENS ASSN.
	WINTER'S RUN CIVIC ASSN.
SILVER SPRING	CLIFTON PARK CIVIC ASSN.
	DUMOUNT OAKS COMMUNITY ASSN.
	FOREST KNOLLS COMMUNITY ASSN.
	FRANKLIN KNOLLS CIVIC ASSN.
	INDIAN SPRINGS CITIZENS ASSN.
	NORTH HILLS OF SLIGO CIVIC ASSN.
	PARK HILLS CIVIC ASSN.
	SEVEN OAKS-EVANSWOOD CITIZENS ASSN.
	SLIGO WOOD CIVIC ASSN.
	SOUTH FOUR CORNERS CITIZENS ASSN.
WHEATON/ SILVER SPRING	WOODSIDE FOREST CITIZENS ASSN.
	ARCOLA WOODS COMMUNITY ASSN.
	COLLEGE VIEW ESTATES CITIZENS ASSN.
	CONNECTICUT AVE ESTATES CIVIC ASSN.
	CONNECTICUT AVE ESTATES NEIGHBORHOOD ASSN.
	FOREST ESTATE CITIZENS ASSN.
	FOREST ESTATE COMMUNITY ASSN.
	FOREST GLEN CITIZENS ASSN.
	FOREST GLEN PARK CITIZENS ASSN.
	FOREST GROVE CITIZEN ASSN.
	GLENMONT EXCHANGE
	GLENMONT FOREST CIVIC ASSN.
	HEADWATERS OF SLIGO CIVIC ASSN.
	KEMP MILLS CIVIC ASSN.
	KEMP MILLS FOREST CIVIC ASSN.

	LINDEN CIVIC ASSN.
	MCKENNEY HILLS CARROLL KNOLLS CIVIC ASSN.
	NORTHMONT CITIZENS ASSN.
	NORTHWOOD -FOUR CORNERS CIVIC ASSN.
	ROCK CREEK WOOD CIVIC ASSN.
	SLIGO HEADWATERS CIVIC ASSN.
	SPRINGBROOK CITIZENS ASSN.
	SPRINGBROOK FOREST CITIZENS ASSN.
	UPPER SLIGO CIVIC ASSN.
	WHEATON CITIZENS COALITION
	WHEATON FOREST CIVIC ASSN.
	WHEATON REGIONAL PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSN.
	WINDING ORCHARD CITIZENS ASSN.