



SOUTH FOUR CORNERS

Citizens Association



January/February 2014 Newsletter

**Next SFCCA Meeting: Monday, January 13th - 7:00 p.m.
at the Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road**

Washington Gas to Replace Gas Main and Service Lines in Our Neighborhood

Starting in the 1st quarter of 2014, Washington Gas will be performing some significant work on gas lines on Brunett Avenue, Dallas Avenue, Grayson Avenue and Lanark Way.

In a letter from construction supervisor Jason Rich, Washington Gas says we can expect: crews to:

- Contact affected customers to schedule the date of their service replacement.
- Shut off gas during the service replacement, but for no longer than one day.
- Perform the work over the next few months (weather permitting) and attempt to complete the construction taking place in front of individual properties within a few days.
- Relight gas appliances, which will require you to allow the service crews access to all gas appliances
- Permanently repair affected roadways and sidewalk as quickly as possible, to as closely to as-found condition as is possible.



Mr. Rich has provided his office telephone number (202-624-6041) for SFCCA resident questions and concerns.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

January 13, 2014, 7 p.m.—SFCCA Meeting, Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Rd.
January 18, 2014, 10 a.m.—Clean-up of Forest Glen Rd (meet at Argyle Park tennis courts)
February 22, 2014—Pruning Practices 10123 Greenock Road (tools will be provided)
March 10, 2014, 4-5 p.m.—SFCCA Meeting, Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Rd.
March 15, 2014—10 a.m.—Clean-up of Forest Glen Rd (meet at Argyle Park tennis courts)
April, 2014, (TBD)—SFCCA Community Yard Sale
May 18, 2014—3-7 p.m.—SFCCA Community Day

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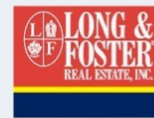
Thanks again.

Dave

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WHY JOIN SFCCA IN 2014?

David Meininger

South Four Corners Citizens Association (SFCCA) represents approximately 1,200 households. We are dedicated to **"Building a stronger community, one neighbor at a time."** We can only do it with **your** support.

Each year, SFCCA holds six community meetings and distributes six newsletters to every household. SFCCA also supports a community-wide Listserv on Yahoo Groups and the website, SouthFourCorners.com. Each of these is an excellent opportunity for you to meet new neighbors and keep informed about issues affecting our neighborhood.

To help foster a closer community, SFCCA sponsors a variety of community-wide activities. In 2013 our activities included two ice cream socials, National Night Out, a community-wide yard sale, garden tours, plant swap, Halloween Parade, Holiday tree lighting and welcome bags for our new neighbors. We have an exciting list of similar activities planned for 2014.

SFCCA is recognized by Montgomery County as the neighborhood voice of South Four Corners. SFCCA belongs to the Montgomery County Civic Federation and we often coordinate with other neighborhood associations within the County on matters of mutual concern.

SFCCA is an advocate for neighborhood improvement. In 2013 we worked with Montgomery County to improve the tree canopy along Forest Glen Road and within South Four Corners Park. Six times a year we sponsor a road-side cleanup of Forest Glen Road.

On occasion, SFCCA will take a position on issues affecting our neighborhood. These issues often involve zoning and development that affect our residential character. In 2013 we took a position on pending changes to the Montgomery County zoning standards.

I encourage you to join SFCCA, participate in our activities and become a volunteer.

January Meeting Guest Speaker: Greg St. James

Greg St James has been the program manager of Montgomery County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) since 2007.

In that time Montgomery County CERT has become a recognized leader in program innovations including regional CERT conferences, training with military units, and outreach events like Storm Camp.

Mr. St. James has been an EMT with the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department since 2003. He has a background in broadcasting and advertising, and can be heard on air at CSPAN television.

St. James moved to Montgomery County from Detroit Michigan in 2000. His hobbies include playing guitar, songwriting, and photography.



Greg St. James is in the center of the bottom row (in the Hawaiian shirt).

Mr. St. James will discuss what CERT does and how we all can be better prepared for disaster and extreme situations.

Dumpster, Donate & Donut—
It's back!

The Tamara Kucik Team, originators of the Silver Spring Dumpster Day, is back with a new twist on the event. We'll supply a dumpster, a donation truck for a local charity, a free-cycle area and DONUTS! (Coffee, too!) Mark your calendar for Feb. 1 and watch for more details. *Like us on Facebook to keep up to date on all of our events in the coming year.*



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Our guest speaker for the evening was Brett Linkletter, the Chief of the Tree Maintenance Section for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. He discussed in detail the duties of his department and their 2 programs; the operations of the department and the capital improvement program. The latter includes the pruning of trees and removal of dead trees.

By dialing 311, you can request a tree for planting in the right of way of your house. The county has a good supply of secure money for planting. The planting season is from November to March. You can also pick from a variety of trees. You can also report a concern of a dead or decaying tree. If that tree falls on your house or car or your neighbor's property and it hasn't been reported, then the county is not responsible for the damages. So call 311 for anything concerning your property and they will put you on their list. You can also call 240-777-8920 for Risk Management and report a dead tree with them.

Looking for an easy way to increase your property value? The answer is **Plant Trees!** The Urban Tree Book, written by Arthur Poltnik, details a trees importance and environmental benefit. Some of those benefits are: increase property value, cleans the air, shade and cool, produces oxygen, an effective sound barrier and fights soil erosion. The United States Forest Service says trees can increase property values as much as 10%.

Marty Maher gave a rundown of Improvements to our neighborhood for the last 13 years: sidewalks, curbs, parks, etc. It was very impressive. I'll have a list in the next newsletter. Suggestions from you for other possible improvements would be very beneficial.

Ghosted! Were you ghosted this Halloween? Ever been ghosted? Let's make it a tradition in our community around the holiday of Halloween. Ghosting is done a week or more before the big day. All you need is some Halloween candy, 2 brown paper lunch bags, 2 copies of the "You've Been Ghosted" letter and 2 copies of the Ghost Picture. Put the candy, one letter and one picture in each of the bags. When it's dark, sneak over to a neighbor's house with an adult, leave the bag on their porch, ring the bell and run away. Don't let them see you. Your Ghosted neighbors will in turn, ghost 2 more people. Before you know it, it will spread throughout the neighborhood. What do you say? Sounds like there will be a bunch of ghosting next Halloween. Tons of Fun!!!

Community Day will be next May 18th. The location is not secured yet, but will let you know when it is. Jeanne Berman gave a list of volunteers, but many more are needed. Please give a bit of your time to make this the best Community Day we have ever had. You can email Jeanne Berman at jzberman8@gmail.com, or call her cell 202-359-1739 to get more information.

Election of officers is May 2014. SFCCA is seeking a President and Vice President to replace our retiring officers. Elections are for one-year terms of office. Other officers, committee chairs and an advisory committee are in place to help you. Interested parties may contact David Meininger at JDavidM@juno.com or Glen Richardson at 301-681-8030 to discuss the positions.

The Garden Classroom Tours will continue in the Spring. My husband and I participated a couple months ago and it was very educational and also tons of fun. Jeanne Berman brings so much knowledge and enthusiasm with her you can't help but enjoy your time with her and everyone that participates. Email her at jzberman8@gmail.com or call her cell 202-359-1739 to get more information and to sign up for the tour of your garden.

SFCCA SEEKS PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

SFCCA is seeking a President and Vice President to replace our retiring officers.

The one year term begins in May 2014. Other officers, committee chairs and an advisory committee are in place to help you. Interested parties may contact David Meininger at JDavidM@juno.com or Glen Richardson at [301-681-8030](tel:301-681-8030) to discuss the positions.

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2nd Annual South Four Corners Snowman-Building Contest

Ben Gross

With the December snow, the 2nd annual Snowman-Building Contest is underway!

Submit your family's cold creation (like this one from the Taylor/Turner household on Portland Road) to the contest by emailing your photos of Frosty to: SFCCAEditor@gmail.com.

All entries will be featured in the newsletter or on the web-site, and the winners announced in an upcoming newsletter!



The Gardening Guru

Jeanne Berman, Horticulturalist

After “snowmagedon” many of us lost some of our favorite garden plants due to heavy snow and ice build up and since we have recently had a bit of snow and ice, I hope I am not too late to offer a little advice to care for your garden plants.

Abrupt weather changes and extreme conditions, at any time of year, can damage many of the plants you have in your garden.

Evergreen trees and shrubs often take the biggest hit during the winter months, especially when conditions are both cold and dry for extended periods. You’re likely to notice the colors fading in most evergreens, some may turn a slight bronze color, which is perfectly natural, but when you see brown, it almost always means the plant is dead.

Chances are the cause of the plant’s demise was a lack of water, assuming it was hardy to begin with (checking the hardiness zone for your plants before purchasing them will give you more success with a plant. Our area hardiness zone is 6B to 7A. In some landscapes you may have an area that “we” call a micro-climate; where conditions are far better than our hardiness zone and will do well there. But noticing a micro-climate in your garden may take a few years of trial and error with some favorite plants.) it is very important to water evergreens during the winter months. After the first hard freeze of winter, it’s equally important to apply a fresh layer of mulch 2 -3 inches deep around evergreens, still careful not to let the mulch touch the bark of the tree trunk. In some taller evergreens such as a “pencil” hollies and arborvitae, damage can be prevented before a storm by wrapping burlap around the tree. Some of your more “tender” trees and shrubs can also be protected by using tree covers. In the event any branches snap or break off you should try to prune it as soon as possible giving the branch or limb a clean cut to avoid any more damage to the plant.

Deciduous trees and shrubs tend to fare better in extreme weather changes, but still require some attention from the gardener. For example, they may need to be pruned to remove deadwood, open the interior of the plant to promote better air circulation and thereby minimize fungal diseases, or merely to reshape the plant.



Always remember not to remove more than one-third of the plant’s growth. Any more than that may stress the plants beyond the point of recovery. Also when you prune, try to retain the natural shape of the plant. In other words, don’t just lop off the top growth to create a tabletop or lollipop shape. You should also inspect the swelling or emerging buds on your plants, whether flower or leaf buds or both— unseasonably warm temperatures followed by hard freezes may damage those buds, causing them to shrivel up or fall off. We often hear about this kind of damage during a freeze close to the cherry blossoms blooming.

Unfortunately there’s nothing you can do to reverse the damage, but at least you’ll know why a particular plant failed to bloom later in the season.

And thankfully, in the case of leaf buds, many plants will produce secondary buds to take the place of the damaged primary buds.

Deciduous trees and shrubs may need a shot of horticultural oil while still dormant to smother scale, mites and other insects that might have **overwintered** on the plants.

Don't be alarmed if some of your trees and shrubs still have brown leaves clinging to the branches this time of year. A number of deciduous plants – pin oaks, Japanese maples and hydrangeas often retain their leaves throughout the winter months, even into early spring. So while they may appear to be in trouble, chances are they're just fine.

Perennials might need to be tended to this time of year as well. In mass plantings of mondo grass, lirioppe, both plants are extremely rugged and many people use a string trimmers or a mower in late winter to cut back the foliage, be careful not to do that with ferns, hostas or peonies, using a trimmer could cause damage to the crowns of the plants.

Many gardeners leave their grasses dry for winter interest and protection for small animals, so when cutting large clumps of these grasses wear gloves and a long sleeve shirt for protection, as most ornamental grasses have very sharp blades.

Houseplants many of us bring our houseplants (aloe, tropical hibiscus, ficus, orchids, palms, etc. outside for the summer and then back indoors for the winter months, when bringing your plants in or out for the season be sure the temperatures are approximately the same inside the house as outside the house. I also advise to use soapy water or horticultural oil (a small amount of dish soap to your watering can) to water the plants before bringing them inside for the winter and during the winter to help control insects buried into the soil.

Knowing your plants is very important to a successful garden and timing is everything.

Join us for a pruning session in David's Meininger's garden on February 22 for a pruning demonstration and discussion. We will meet at 10 a.m. at 10123 Greenock Road. You will also get to see his newly installed rain garden! Here we will discuss what to prune when and different pruning methods. Tools will be available to use and we will do some pruning in his garden.

Hope to see you in the garden!

If you would like to have us visit your garden, please contact me at: jzberman@gmail.com.



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Bus Rapid Transit

Larry Dickter, Lanark Way

Some of you may recall the Montgomery County elections of 2002, when a slate of candidates led by then Montgomery County Executive Doug Duncan ran for office promising that, if elected, they would “end gridlock”.

The centerpiece of their platform was the Inter County Connector (ICC), the \$4 billion superhighway that opened in 2011 and which is notable today mainly for its empty travel lanes (even at the height of rush hour) and for its high tolls. Needless to say, the ICC and other new road projects were not a panacea for gridlock, as traffic congestion today is worse than ever.

Montgomery County planners and elected officials are no longer talking about ending gridlock. Instead, their goal is simply to make traffic “less worse,” not better. To that end, the County Council recently approved a transportation blueprint that would establish a network of bus rapid transit (BRT) routes along major County roads, including Route 29/ Colesville Road. It is hoped that this “least worst” option will get people out of their cars and onto transit.



An example of a bus rapid transit vehicle.

The unanimous Council vote reflects a growing consensus, tempered though with a heavy dose of skepticism, that BRT is the last remaining alternative to doing nothing about deteriorating traffic conditions, caused in part by past (and no doubt future) Council approval of excessive over development without the infrastructure (roads, schools, etc.) to support it. With over one million current residents, the County’s population is expected to grow by another ten percent in the near future.

We are all aware of the nightmare that the Four Corners intersection can be. The vision of a fleet of sleek new buses speeding through the intersection is enormously appealing. But therein lies the rub.

For BRT to truly avoid bottlenecks at the failed crossroads of University Blvd. and Colesville Rd., there must be “dedicated” lanes reserved for buses only and about the only way to obtain those lanes on Colesville is to either widen the road itself or to “repurpose” lanes currently used by cars. Without those dedicated lanes, buses approaching Four Corners would have to blend into shared lanes with all the other traffic on the road at the time.

The action taken by Council in November authorizes an official study of what would be involved were the County to proceed with BRT. Since the Route 29 corridor is among the high priorities for BRT, the Four Corners community needs to pay close attention to the process, beginning with the study phase, each and every step of the way.

In the final analysis, some BRT routes may prove too problematic and/or too costly to build. The entire plan may turn out to be, in Councilmember Nancy Floreen’s words, “mostly a feel good aspiration”. However, we need to remain vigilant as the process moves forward in order to protect the interests of Four Corners neighborhoods and pedestrians.

Bus Rapid Transit (cont.)

As our neighbors who were engaged in the great “battle of the underpass” during the 1980s learned from their struggle: Don’t assume that any proposal is too impractical or destructive to advance. If you think the intersection at Four Corners is unsafe and hostile to pedestrians today, imagine if the State Highway Administration had not been forced by community activists (including South Four Corners’ own Karen Michel) to abandon its plan to tunnel Colesville Road under University Blvd.

None of this is to say that some variant of BRT might not prove to be a workable way of easing traffic congestion in Four Corners. However, neighborhood groups such as ours must be intimately involved as various design strategies are studied, so we don’t end up with the prospect of another “big dig” or something equally unacceptable.

Due to pressure from neighborhood activists, the County Council has already added steps to ensure extensive public participation in the planning process for BRT. For instance, a citizens advisory group will be created for each corridor being studied, including Route 29/Colesville Road. Councilmember Roger Berliner, having heard the message loud and clear from representatives of the affected communities, agreed that “this is too big not to have our communities involved in every way imaginable.”

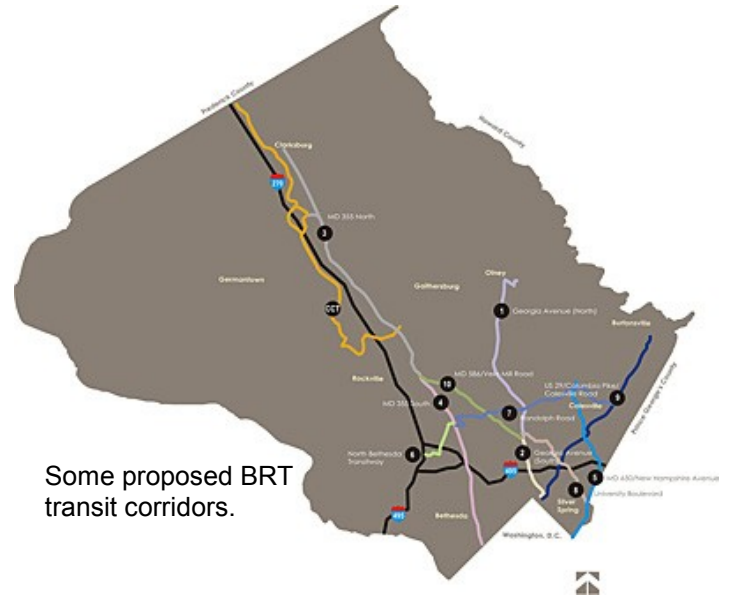
What follows is a letter from Glen Richardson, South Four Corners Citizens Association Vice President, to the Montgomery County Council in which he outlines some of his concerns and recommendations with regard to the BRT route along the Route 29 corridor.

Dear Council President Navarro:

*I am writing regarding the Council’s proposed **Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan**. This Plan, if adopted as is, would significantly amend the **Four Corners Master Plan**, without the benefit of a Citizens Advisory Committee or an analysis of the impact to surrounding neighborhoods.*

I am concerned that after several years of study that new recommendations were made for the area at the last minute in the last few weeks after all the public hearings were held. This is the only area in the Functional Plan where the recommendations were increased. We are not aware of any testimony from people in this area that requested that the Planning Board recommendations be increased from mixed traffic to dedicated lanes through the Four Corners intersection and in close proximity to the very congested Beltway access points along University Boulevard and Colesville Road. Such significant changes to a neighborhood should be vetted through the Area Master Plan process, not during a two minute discussion during a work session without input from the public.

The area along Colesville Road south of New Hampshire Avenue is residential and many residents of the neighborhoods in the area are limited to entering and exiting their neighborhoods via either Colesville Road or University Boulevard.



Some proposed BRT transit corridors.

Glen Richardson's letter to County Council President Nancy Navarro (cont.)

There are also 10 entrance and exit ramps to and from the Beltway along Colesville (6 ramps) and University (4 ramps). There are no other residential neighborhoods in the County that are as impacted by as many Beltway access points as this area is. A dedicated lane in the median with raised curbs would prevent residents from accessing their neighborhoods and the resulting excessive u-turn movements along the roadway would create very dangerous conditions. In making recommendations for the very similar Georgia Avenue segments near the Beltway, Council Staff stated in memorandum that "... this section would run in mixed traffic, since the traffic volume on this segment of Georgia Avenue will be too high for a lane to be repurposed for buses without severe congestion consequences." The new recommendations for the Four Corners area would create even more severe consequences in both directions on both Colesville and University which would result in more adverse impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

*A dedicated lane along Colesville Road through the Four Corners intersection **was not** recommended by either the **MCDOT July 2011 Countywide Bus Rapid Transit Study** or by the Planning Board in their **July 2013 Draft Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan**. The right-of-way is also severely constrained in this area. The Countywide Bus Rapid Transit Study states that BRT may operate in mixed traffic in areas with constrained rights-of-way.*

For the reasons outlined above, we request the following:

- 1. That no increased treatments beyond the Planning Board recommendations be adopted in this Master Plan without an **additional public hearing** on the proposed changes. This is the only area in the*
- 2. Functional Plan for which the recommendations were increased and residents want to be heard on these changes before you adopt this Plan. The hearing should be restricted to those changes to the Plan that recommend increased treatment above the Planning Board recommendations.*
- 3. That the **Route 29 corridor be evaluated as two routes**: Route 29 North between the Burtonsville Park and Ride and New Hampshire Avenue (7.4 miles) and Route 29 South between New Hampshire Avenue and Downtown Silver Spring (4.5 miles). This is consistent with the other two proposed north-south routes: Georgia Avenue North (9.8 miles) and Georgia Avenue South (3.7 miles) and Route 355 North (13 miles) and Route 355 South (7.9 miles).*

The Functional Plan recognizes that the Route 29 corridor is two separate roads with very different characteristics. South of New Hampshire Avenue, Colesville Road is a residential area with neighborhood, school, commercial and institutional access points, significant pedestrian activity, the previously mentioned Beltway access points and no available right-of-way for expansion.

North of New Hampshire Avenue, Route 29 is classified as a major highway and has much wider right-of-way, wide medians, several grade separated interchanges and the buses currently travel in the shoulder lane. The proposed BRT would have very limited, if any impacts on the area north of New Hampshire Avenue, while south of New Hampshire, there are many varied impacts to be considered.

Therefore, the corridor should be split into two routes for purposes of future studies. Thank you and the Council for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Glen Richardson, Vice President, SFCCA
November 24, 2013*

South Four Corners Community Day

Sunday, May 18th

3:00 – 7:00 pm

Please join us for a fun filled afternoon with neighbors, friends and family for fun, music, games, dinner, prizes, crafts, cake walk, trucks, moonbounce, face painting, plant swap, and much more!

We are still in the planning stages for this event and hope we can encourage you to help volunteer.

A meeting is planned for January if you would like to be involved in the planning of this event.

Please help—we need our good neighbors of our community to help make this a fabulous day for all of us.

If you'd like to help make this the best South Four Corners Community Day ever, volunteer your talent, skill, supplies or just energy!

Please contact Jeanne Berman—jzberman@gmail.com (e) 202-359-1739 (p), or David Meininger j davidm@juno.com (e).

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