



SOUTH FOUR CORNERS

Citizens Association



Building a stronger community, one neighbor at a time

Fall 2024

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sept 14 – 1 to 5 pm
Front Porch Music Fest

Sept 17 – 7 pm
SFCCA Community Meeting
Schweinhaut Senior Center
Speaker: **Glenda Franco**
(see speaker info page 3)

October 27 – 4 pm
Halloween Parade
Schweinhaut Senior Center

November 19 – 7 pm
SFCCA Community Meeting
Schweinhaut Senior Center

January 21, 2025 – 7 pm
SFCCA Community Meeting
Schweinhaut Senior Center

Join us for our 3rd annual Music Fest!

Featuring 19 bands, 6 stages, and 2 food trucks!!

South Four Corners
Front Porch
Music Fest!!

A Day of Music in SFC!

Grab friends & family, stroll
the neighborhood, and enjoy
listening to our talented
community play music!

Where: Front Porches
When: Sept 14, 2024
(Rain dates: Sept 21 or 28)
Time: 1-5 pm

DETAILS & SCHEDULE:
<https://tinyurl.com/sfcmusicfest>

For more info, use the QR code or visit the website
above. **THANK YOU** to our generous **sponsors:**
Olivia Fenton (realtor) and **Nick Comeau** (home loans).



President's Corner

Hello Neighbors!

I want to take a moment here to introduce myself to all of you who were not in attendance at our general meeting in May when I was elected to be your new association president.

My wife Monica and I moved onto Hereford Place in November of 2004. From our first few weeks here we knew that this neighborhood was the right place to start and grow our family. Our nextdoor neighbor Jackie welcomed us with open arms, literally, the first time we met her before finalizing the purchase of our home. Within days of settling into our new home our neighbor across the street, Dave Nettleton brought over a welcome bag that included delicious home baked goods.

We've done all the things that a growing family does in this area – meeting other families, participating in community sports, taking advantage of the local parks, and being active in our children's schools. I'm sure just like many of you we've faced a lot of the common challenges that you face as families and individuals as time passes and the world changes around us. In the face of those challenges, this neighborhood and the broader community around it has been one element that has made things a bit easier and more pleasant: homes (and trees!) with a bit of history, shopping opportunities you can walk to, a short bus, bike, walk, or car ride to a bustling downtown and metro plaza, multiple entry points to the

Beltway, good school options, and a natural oasis in Sligo Creek Park, while still feeling like a village where neighbors know and take care of each other.

The core of this neighborhood and this community is the people. I want to highlight and **thank all of you** who have joined our Association and volunteered your time in service. You are a part of the force that makes this a great neighborhood and community. For those of you who have not joined us yet, please consider joining the Association and volunteering if you can. We want to hear from you and we welcome your participation in continuing to make this neighborhood a great place to live.

You can get more information about our Association on our website: <https://southfourcorners.org/> and you can join here: <https://southfourcorners.org/membership/>

If you're interested in volunteering, look for information about our committees in this newsletter or contact me directly via email. I hope to see you all at our next general meeting on September 17th.

Thank you!

Jeff Lesperance

President, SFCCA

Email: SFCCA.President@gmail.com

SFCCA Officers & Chairpersons

Officers:

President - Jeff Lesperance

Vice President - Jonathan Kirschebaum

Secretary - Tricia Brooks

Treasurer - Eileen Broderick

Committee Chairs:

Communications - **VACANT**

DEI - **VACANT**

Membership - Eileen Broderick

Public Safety - Abigail Beach

Public Works - **VACANT**

Social Events - Tricia Brooks (interim)

Zoning, Land Use and Traffic - Jeff Lesperance

Subcommittee Leads:

Listserv Manager - Jeff Lesperance. Newsletter Distribution - Dave Nettleton

Newsletter Editor / Website - Jane Jannotta. Welcome Bags - John Holden

SFCCA Addresses & Social Media

Mailing Address:

SFCCA PO Box 792

Silver Spring, MD 20918-0792

Website:

www.southfourcorners.org

Editor: SFCCAeditor@gmail.com

SFCCA Listservs:

<https://groups.io/g/SFCCAMembers>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/southfourcorners/



Important Phone Numbers:

Montgomery County (MC) General Info & Service: 311. Outside of MC: 240-777-0311. TTY (for hearing impaired): 240-773-3556.

Police & fire emergency: 911. Police non-emergency: 301-279-8000. Fire non-emergency: 240-776-4700.

24-Hour Emergency Preparedness Hotline: 240-777-4200. Power outages, downed wires: Pepco 877-737-2662.

Website: <http://www.pepco.com/outage-center/>

SFCCA Community

COMMITTEES

Volunteers welcome! If you are interested in participating in our association, we have a number of committees in need of volunteers. Some of these committees are up and running, while others need a bit more help to get them going. Please email sfcca.president@gmail.com if you are interested in joining any of these committees or if you're interested in volunteering in any other way.

- **Communications:** May include helping out with newsletter production and distribution; soliciting locally-based businesses to advertise in the newsletter; keeping SFCCA website and Facebook page up-to-date; maintaining and monitoring SFCCA's listserv.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility:** Acts as a resource to the other committees ensuring our diverse perspectives are considered in our initiatives.
- **Public Safety:** Includes crime prevention and awareness; serving as liaison to the community services officer in Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) District 3; pedestrian safety; point of contact for annual National Night Out; sidewalks and crosswalks; cut-through traffic and speeding on neighborhood roads.

GET INVOLVED

- **Public Works:** Includes communicating with Washington Gas, PEPCO and WSSC on an as-needed basis; reporting any need for street repairs to the appropriate authorities; developing ideas and plans to enhance South Four Corners' natural environment, such as our tree canopy.
- **Social Events:** Brings all community-wide social activities (such as the annual Community Yard Sale and Halloween parade) under one big umbrella; involves planning, coordinating, and producing SFCCA's bi-annual, much anticipated Community Day that is held at the Schweinhaut Senior Center on Forest Glen Road.
- **Zoning, Land Use, and Transportation:** Involves monitoring, evaluating and informing the neighborhood of any proposed zoning changes that may affect our community; tracking government-funded projects, as well as those proposed by private developers, that may impact the livability of the greater Four Corners area; may involve attending (either remotely or in-person) meetings of the Montgomery County Planning Board and/or County Council; advocating for data-driven, multimodal approaches to easing traffic congestion on our roadways. □

Next SFCCA Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 17, 7-8:30pm

Schweinhaut Senior Center 1000 Forest Glen Road

Featuring guest speaker:

Glenda Franco, Community Services Officer



Please join us for our September Association meeting to hear from our guest speaker, Montgomery County Police Department 3rd District Community Services Officer, **Glenda Franco**, who will talk about local crime statistics and how she and the police can assist with some of the programs SFCCA's Public Safety Committee is planning.

Officer Franco has been a Montgomery County Police Officer for 19 years and previously served as a New York City police officer for 5 years. As Community Services Officer, Officer Franco helps bridge the gap between the police department and the community. This comes in the form of attending crime prevention meetings, hosting police station tours for community members, hosting Coffee with a Cop events, and participating in career days at local schools. Alongside Officer Franco, our Public Safety Committee will discuss some details around the programs they're initiating.

We'll also hear from our Zoning, Land Use, and Transportation Committee regarding the status of the University Boulevard Corridor Plan proposal and our proposed position for the association, which we'll bring to attending members for a vote. As a reminder, you must be a member in good standing to vote on Association matters; there is one vote per member household. □

Local History

BLAIR HIGH SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY IN COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

By Laurence Dickter

When I first moved to our neighborhood in 1990, Silver Spring's downtown core was sitting on a knife edge. After years of disinvestment and decline, its once vibrant shopping and business district was caught in a downward spiral that only an ambitious, viable redevelopment plan could ever hope to reverse. After several failed proposals, it would not be until the end of the decade that a workable plan was agreed upon and put into place.

The saving grace throughout this period was the resilience of the single family, residential neighborhoods bordering the downtown core, as well as those neighborhoods further out, including our own. Defying expectations, there was no "middle class flight".

It was felt by many local residents, among others, that the future of Silver Spring was inextricably tied as much to the future of its public schools as to anything else. The preservation of Montgomery Blair High School's academic excellence, along with its diverse programs and student body, were seen as paramount to retaining long-time residents, as well as attracting new ones, particularly young families. It was also believed that a highly regarded, state-of-the-art high school, along with high performing feeder schools, would help boost the chances for badly needed economic development downtown by attracting businesses, both large and small, to locate there.

Takoma-Silver Spring High school, Montgomery Blair's precursor, was founded in 1925. When its junior and senior high schools were split ten years later, Blair High School was constructed on Wayne Avenue, opening

in March 1935. Some sixty-odd years later, Blair's burgeoning enrollment and badly outdated facilities were at a breaking point. While its math/science magnet and other programs were gaining national prominence, it was painfully evident that Silver Spring needed a new high school (as well as additional middle and elementary schools).

Although the Montgomery County Board of Education was in favor of building a new Blair high school, it would be nearly a decade before one was finally approved by the County Council

In the meantime, a broad-based, community-wide coalition organized itself into one of the most effective and persistent advocacy groups ever assembled in Montgomery County up to that time. Bringing together more than thirty civil rights, business and labor leaders, along with many PTA and civic activists, Citizens for a Better Blair ("Citizens") was formed in 1992. I was appointed by the President of the South Four Corners Citizens Association to serve as our neighborhood's representative to the group. As a relative "newbie" to the issues under study by Citizens, I took my seat at the table with an open mind and without any "confirmation biases".

In the beginning, "Citizens" functioned strictly as a study group, spending months gathering and analyzing data, while looking at a dozen options to remedy overcrowding and inadequate facilities on Wayne Avenue. Additional priorities for the group included maintaining the diversity of Blair's student body and preserving its comprehensive academic programs under one roof. In its pursuit of

consensus, a wide variety of viewpoints and potential solutions were considered. After many long months of discussion and robust debate, the group overwhelmingly (though not quite unanimously) concluded that the best option by far was to build a new high school on the long vacant 42-acre "Kay Tract" in Four Corners, bordered by University Boulevard, Colesville Road and the Capital Beltway.

(Full disclosure: I ended up voting for "Blair on Kay").



Even before Citizens wrapped up its study and issued its report, the group entered an even more challenging and intense phase of its work. Although "Blair on Kay" enjoyed widespread support throughout the Blair community, as well as the endorsement of the elected County school board, a majority of the nine-member County Council opposed it. The needle was stuck for months at four in favor and five against. I still recall our group meeting with Silver Spring's own District 5 councilmember who told us to give up the fight, that we would never get that elusive fifth vote.

Recognizing that funding decisions are often driven more by political considerations than they are by fiscal ones, Citizens spun off a political action committee (or PAC) called Voters for a Better Blair Community ("Voters"). The goal of this PAC was to inform and to

organize residents of southeastern Montgomery County into a strong, cohesive political force in order to bring pressure to bear on elected officials whenever impactful matters affecting Silver Spring and Takoma Park arose. Blair on Kay became "Voters" top priority.

As the 1995 fiscal year approached, Councilmembers dead-set against "Blair on Kay" started coming up with new "out-there" proposals to block it. One proposal was to build a new Blair on the Sligo golf course and then to rebuild the golf course on the Kay Tract! Another proposal would have expanded the footprint of Blair on Wayne by demolishing untold numbers of homes behind the school.

Fortunately for Blair on Kay advocates, 1994 was an election year, in which all nine councilmembers were running for re-election. Four of the five opponents of "Blair on Kay" represented far-flung districts and, with no political price to pay for their opposition, felt little pressure to change their minds. However, the fifth opponent (the golf course guy) was an at-large councilmember elected countywide, making him directly accountable to

thousands of constituents in the Silver Spring area. Under intense pressure from "Voters" and its community supporters, and facing the prospect of defeat at the ballot box, he changed his vote in May of that year. And after one of the district councilmembers, under heavy pressure from the business community, also changed his vote, the final tally was 6-3 in favor of "Blair on Kay". A little more than two years later, construction on the school officially began.



Jan Abbott and another SFC neighbor breaking ground

For many who were involved in this long struggle, I know that it reinforced

for them the power of building broad-based coalitions, doing the necessary homework, grass roots organizing and effective messaging. But perhaps above all else, it showed what the strategic application of political muscle can achieve, even against great odds.

I was invited to participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for "Blair on Kay" that was held on June 15, 1996. It was an honor for me to accompany Jan Abbott, our former neighbor on Lanark Way, as she stepped in front of the row of shovels awaiting us. I have vivid memories of Mrs. Abbott, a **1935 graduate of Montgomery Blair's first graduating class**, smiling broadly as she drove her shovel into the ground. I saw how meaningful it was to her just being there, and how proud she was to be included in the day's celebration.

Before school boundaries were redrawn, Blair on Kay was the "base" high school for part of our neighborhood. In fact, the heavily travelled sidewalk and curbs running the entire length of Lanark Way, from Dallas to Colesville Road were built to accommodate neighborhood students on their way to school. □

Become a Legend today!

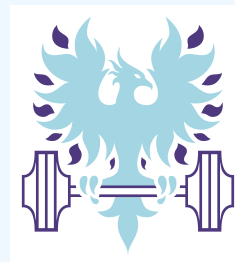
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ATTAINABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE GATHERS STEAM

By John Holden

As noted in the last SFCCA newsletter, the Montgomery County Planning Department (“Montgomery Planning”) has been considering zoning changes that would allow more diverse housing types in single-family, residential neighborhoods such as South Four Corners (SFC). More recently, the five-member Montgomery County Planning Board (“Planning Board”) approved Montgomery Planning’s recommendations for what it calls “attainable” housing, sending them to the County Council for review and possible adoption as early as this Fall.

The County Council and Montgomery Planning will be hosting five in-person ‘listening sessions’ in September (all at 7-9pm), plus one online session at 12 noon on October 2. Residents are encouraged to attend and make their voices heard. (See sidebar, page 7.)

The recommendations currently being considered by the Council would **eliminate single-family zoning in much of the county, including all of South Four Corners (SFC)**. The zoning changes would **permit duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and quadplexes** on single-family lots, as well as **small apartment buildings (up to 19 units)** on lots within a certain distance of specific “corridors” such as University Blvd and Colesville Rd. The goal is to diversify housing types within areas currently zoned for single-family houses.

While more housing units will be needed to address the predicted future growth in County population, the proposed zoning changes will not create more *affordable* housing. All of the resulting new housing is expected to be market-rate, without any affordability requirement, so more units will not mean less expensive, affordable

units.

The zoning changes are based on and informed by *Thrive Montgomery 2050* (“*Thrive*”), the new blueprint for growth and development adopted by the County Council in November 2022, just days before six newly elected Councilmembers were sworn into office. Shortly before Council voted on *Thrive*, County Executive Marc Elrich pointed out the following:

- *Thrive* does not provide any solution to address rising rents or the cost of home ownership; its guiding principle is to produce more housing through a countywide rezoning of single-family neighborhoods, despite little evidence that this “trickle-down” theory will help to lower rents or the cost of home ownership.
- There are 35,000 housing units in the development pipeline that are already approved by the Planning Board; all the developers need to do is get a building permit. Add to that another 85,000 units that are part of our approved master plans within existing zoning, the vast majority near transit. This housing is not being built.
- *Thrive* does not ask why, but we need to understand why before we rezone 123 square miles of the county’s single-family neighborhoods, much of which contains relatively affordable, stable housing.
- Montgomery Planning’s own study in Silver Spring showed that the new housing envisioned would be more expensive than existing housing and unaffordable to most people.

Over time, the proposed zoning changes will likely have a dramatic impact on



existing single-family residential neighborhoods like SFC. These impacts may include the following:

1. There are no specific plans to address the fact that greater housing density will increase demands on overburdened County services like police and fire protection, and on existing infrastructure such as schools, roads, and libraries. Environmentally, loss of tree canopy and storm water management issues are also of concern.
2. There is limited off-street parking available on many neighborhood streets, and the zoning text amendment passed earlier this year by the County Council eliminates parking space requirements for redeveloped properties within a quarter-mile radius of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station. With no requirements for off-street parking, one quadplex alone could add six or more cars vying for spaces on neighborhood streets.
3. The cost of the “attainable” housing units will be too expensive and result in gentrification, incentivizing redevelopment that will price out some of the organically affordable, older stock of housing (“naturally occurring affordable housing”).

Home ownership is a widely shared goal for many reasons, including greater neighborhood stability and the fact that it offers many residents their principal means to accumulate wealth. As noted recently by SDAT (State Department of Assessment and Taxation), however, there is an increasing trend towards private equity firms and other large institutional investors buying up residential properties in neighborhoods like SFC, out-bidding

first-time home buyers. Conversion of owner-occupied housing to institutionally owned rental housing makes housing more expensive and reduces housing choices available to county residents. As absentee landlords, the investors may also ignore upkeep on their properties.

A recent estimate for inventory of investor-owned single-family homes in the DC metro area is now at ten percent. In response to this trend here and elsewhere, and in an effort to check it, the *Stop Predatory Investing Act* has been introduced in the current session of the U.S. Congress.

Elected officials need to engage meaningfully with the affected communities where changes are proposed. The impact of new

development on the quality of life in existing neighborhoods needs to be carefully evaluated. In May, the Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF) adopted a resolution on *Priorities and Approaches to Housing Policy and Legislation*, and it deserves careful consideration; see pages 16-20 of the June 2024 Civic Federation News

(<https://montgomerycivic.org/files/CFNlatest.pdf>).
At this time, residents are advised to stay informed, attend meetings, and let their elected officials know that their constituents are paying attention and will hold them accountable for the votes they cast. ☐

County Council and Montgomery Planning Listening Sessions:

In-person (all at 7 – 9 PM):

- Wed, Sept 11, at Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center
- Thurs, Sept 12, at Wheaton Community Recreation Center
- Tues, Sept 17 (also SFCCA mtg date), at White Oak Community Recreation Center
- Mon, Sept 23, at Germantown Community Center
- Wed, Sept 25, at Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, Wisconsin Room

Online (12 – 1:30 PM):

- Wed, Oct. 2, on Zoom

Puzzle Corner

WORD SEARCH

By Sue Bahr

Find the names of **streets in South Four Corners!** The names can be found horizontally or vertically.

BRISTOL
BRUNETT
COLESVILLE
DALLAS
DENNIS
FORESTGLEN
GILMOURE
GODWIN
GRAYSON
GREENOCK
HARDING
HEREFORD
KINROSS
LANARK
LORAIN
MARKHAM
MEURILEE

S	O	Z	R	X	G	R	E	E	N	O	C	K	O	K	L	A	C	X	S
P	U	V	Y	G	P	R	O	C	T	E	R	V	G	H	I	T	H	R	L
E	P	N	U	H	S	D	N	A	L	T	R	O	P	N	V	X	H	E	I
M	S	S	O	R	N	I	K	A	T	H	E	C	Y	N	L	E	T	D	G
D	B	F	M	A	H	K	R	A	M	Q	T	G	O	I	W	L	R	D	O
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R	O	U	W	R	R	R	J	H	R	U	M	K	A	I	H	H	W	E	I
A	K	R	S	I	D	N	E	Y	O	Q	O	A	L	N	V	T	U	R	P
Y	L	B	G	U	Y	U	B	Z	L	V	U	U	C	G	U	U	U	O	J
S	R	O	L	O	T	S	I	R	B	A	R	E	W	J	G	S	M	F	W
O	Y	T	I	S	R	E	V	I	N	U	E	G	N	I	L	R	I	T	S
N	D	O	R	S	A	L	L	A	D	Q	Z	U	G	T	R	A	G	O	R

PERTH
PORTLAND
PROCTER
QUINBY
RAYNOR
REDDICK
RENFREW
ROGART
ROSWELL
SIDNEY
SLIGOCREEK
STIRLING
STROUT
SUTHERLAND
TENBROOK
UNIVERSITY

Event Recap

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

By Jeff Lesperance

On August 6th our community participated in National Night Out (<https://natw.org>) at South Four Corners Park. It was a hot evening, but thanks to some welcome shade at the park and some cold and frozen refreshments, we were able to get together and meet with representatives of our local police department, including our Community Service Officer, Glenda Franco, and McGruff the crime dog. Delegate Lorig Charkoudian also

joined in as well as two representatives from Congressman Jamie Raskin's office.

Thanks to our public safety committee chairperson Abigail Beach for planning and coordinating with officer Franco and in setting us up with refreshments and take home gifts for the kids. This is a great community and we hope to see you at the next Night Out. □



Upcoming Event

HALLOWEEN PARADE

OCT 27, 4PM

By Christie Cannady

Calling all ghosts, goblins, princesses, superheroes, and beyond! South Four Corners kids and adults are invited to gather in costume for our **Annual Halloween Parade!**

The parade will leave on foot a few minutes after 4pm from the **Schweinhaut Senior Center parking lot** closest to South Four Corners Park. From there we will walk up Portland Road, turn right through the Lanark Way bioswale, and come down Dallas Avenue to finish back at the Park. Neighbors and other non-paraders are welcome



to cheer us on along the route!

Following the parade, participants will receive pre-packaged treats at South Four Corners Park.

If you would like to donate a pre-packaged snack or goodies (bags of chips/pretzels, bags of mini-cookies, juice boxes, toys/favors, etc.), and/or volunteer to set-up or clean-up the event or help lead parade goers, please email **Christie Cannady** at christie.cannady@gmail.com.

Looking forward to a fun and spooky good time! □

Join Us!

MEMBERSHIP



Support your community and become a member of the South Four Corners Citizens Association! SFCCA is the voice of our residential community. Its vigorous advocacy and events make South Four Corners safer, more beautiful and more connected. Dues are one person/household. There are three ways to pay, or scan the QR code:

1. Pay \$20 cash or check at the upcoming SFCCA meeting
2. Mail your \$20 check to: SFC Membership, PO Box 792, Silver Spring, MD 20918-0792
3. Pay \$22 online with PayPal at: <https://southfourcorners.org/membership/>



LISTSERV

SFCCA has an email group listserv that serves as the best way for us to communicate with each other. Not only is the group a great place for us to share association news and events, it's a great place for you to communicate with your neighbors.

There are currently ~650 members on our listserv while there are 1152 households within the boundaries of our association. If you're not on the list, **please consider joining** at <https://groups.io/g/SFCCAMembers> or scan the QR code.

