

# Twinbrook Citizens Association

P.O. Box 834

“You can make a difference in your community”

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June 1, 2010

Dear Twinbrook Supporter,

We've had a year of milestones in Rockville, including the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the chartering of the city, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twinbrook Recreation Center, and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Twinbrook Citizens Association.

I'm glad we're all still here.

However, those of you who have been reading our newsletters and emails for a while will remember that the first settler of what would become Twinbrook arrived in 1719. Caleb Litton, discharged British soldier, patented his Autre St. Mary's farm when "Rockville" was a dirt crossroads. I often think about what it meant to him and his wife Grace to own their own property and raise ten children on what was then a real frontier. I don't think they were much different from the people who buy homes in Twinbrook now and send their kids to Twinbrook or Meadow Hall. They also must have wanted to ***“enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.”***

I can't tell you how much I appreciate the time and **good will** given by your neighbors who serve on our Executive Committee and who work with TCA on Twinbrook issues. In a time when all organizations struggle to keep volunteers, I'm very grateful for those who step forward and serve to keep Twinbrook safe and family friendly.

Hope to see you on Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, at Twinbrook Day in the Parks!

Sincerely,

Christina Y. Ginsberg,  
President, Twinbrook Citizens Association

## **Residents Invited to Twinbrook Day at the Park** *Free Community Fair to be Held Saturday, June 5*

The City of Rockville is partnering with local businesses, the Twinbrook Pool and the Twinbrook Citizens Association to host a free community fair on Saturday, June 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Twinbrook Day at the Park will include activities for kids, live music, a community yard sale, fitness classes and informational booths and tables. The event will be held at Rockcrest Park and Ballet Center, 1331 Broadwood Drive, and Twinbrook Community Recreation Center, 12920 Twinbrook Parkway.

"Twinbrook Day at the Park is going to be fun for all ages," said Hjarman Cordero, senior neighborhood resources coordinator. "We've got some great community partners who have really helped us put together a wide variety of activities and information for residents."

To participate in Twinbrook Day at the Park, residents may pick up a "passport" at the Rockcrest Ballet Center and then visit booths and try activities to earn passport stamps. Participants who earn four or more stamps are eligible for a free pool pass to the Twinbrook Pool. The pass may be used between 2 and 4 p.m., the day of the event.

For more information about Twinbrook Day at the Park, including a schedule and a list of participating community groups and businesses, visit the City's website at [www.rockvillemd.gov/twinbrook/park.html](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/twinbrook/park.html).

# TCA in 2009 - 2010

## Memorial Trees Planted in Rockcrest

The Twinbrook Citizens Association donated six trees to the City Recreation and Parks department in April. The City Forester planted the trees at two locations in Rockcrest.

The trees include three American lindens (*Tilia americana*), two Virginia fringetrees (*Chionanthus virginicus*) and one Missouri witchhazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*). The trees were sourced from Kollar Nursery, a native plant nursery north of Baltimore.

At the request of several TCA members, two of the American lindens have been designated in memory of longtime Twinbrook residents Ron Nelson and David Nolan.

## American Reinvestment and Recovery Act Funds Road Projects in Twinbrook

Twinbrook received funding from the Act of 2009 for two long-anticipated road projects: resurfacing of Veirs Mill and changes to the intersection at Veirs Mill and First Street. Both roads are "owned" by the State of Maryland.

Veirs Mill had not been resurfaced in more than 25 years, and the poor state of that road was identified by the TCA several years ago as a significant problem for Twinbrook, both for our "image" and property values and for just the inconvenience of using a substandard road.

Proposed changes to the Veirs Mill/First Street intersections were brought to the community in 2007, and included a proposal for an \$80 million dollar "flying overpass" similar to one in Burtonsville. Neighboring communities including Twinbrook, East Rockville, and Burgundy Estates lobbied for the simpler, \$1 million dollar lane improvements which are currently being installed.

"Spadework" by both City Staff and the State Department of Transportation resulted in the projects being "shovel ready" when Federal money became available through the Act.

## 2010 Financial Seminar

The TCA's Treasurer Richard Gottfried led a seminar on February 28<sup>th</sup> at the Rockville Memorial Library which focused on the many changes to the 2009 tax law for new types of deductions. This was the third in a series of seminars addressing the financial needs of our residents.

## Good Neighbor Awards 2010

In 2009, TCA nominated 14 citizens of Twinbrook to receive Good Neighbor Awards.

Who are YOUR good neighbors? Send your nominations to the TCA at [twinbrookpres@yahoo.com](mailto:twinbrookpres@yahoo.com) or to our Neighborhood Resources coordinator Hjarman Cordero at [hcordero@rockvillemd.gov](mailto:hcordero@rockvillemd.gov).

## Crime Monitoring Continues

The TCA continues to remain active in monitoring crime in Twinbrook and supporting police efforts. Although in general crime has decreased during the past year, crimes at the Twinbrook Metro continue to be of concern. A joint meeting between Montgomery County, Metro and Rockville in May brought out a good number of residents concerned about police coverage.

Rockville City police confirmed that they had been running undercover patrols at the Twinbrook Metro. In one case, a citizen witness was able to obtain a license plate number for an assailant's car, and in another case a victim was able to identify his assailants who had remained in the neighborhood.

Criminals seem to be targeting Metro stations in general throughout the county and criminals who have committed assaults and robberies at Twinbrook have also been linked to similar incidents in Wheaton.

The TCA raised concerns about the potential for an increase in crime with the Twinbrook Station developer several years ago and initiated the idea that the County plan provide surveillance cameras in the garages to be built as part of the Twinbrook Station development (there will be little or no surface parking once Twinbrook Station is completely built). JBG was not in attendance at the recent meeting. TCA plans to follow up with the county and the developer about contributing to the security of the newly constructed area.

As part of the CIP requests submitted to the City in late 2009, TCA requested additional lighting on Halpine and a surveillance camera to monitor the intersection of Lewis and Halpine. After an additional push by TCA after the recent incidents, the requested street lighting was successfully installed in May.

Anyone wishing to join or head a local Neighborhood Watch in Twinbrook can contact either the TCA or the City of Rockville Police neighborhood liaison Cpl. Ken Matney at [KMatney@rockvillemd.gov](mailto:KMatney@rockvillemd.gov).

City of Rockville police present complete crime statistics at every TCA Executive Committee Meeting. Police contact numbers:

Emergency – use 911, all respond

Non-emergency

Metro Transit	(202) 962-2121
Montgomery County	(301) 279-8000
Rockville	(240) 214-8900
Park Police	(301) 949-8010

As we have done for many years, TCA donated \$200 to the Rockville Public Safety Awards, which are held annually to honor our local police. This year, the awards luncheon will be held at Lakewood County Club on June 9<sup>th</sup>. For more information, contact John Tyner at: [tyner@taliesan.com](mailto:tyner@taliesan.com)

## **TCA Hosts 2009 Televised Candidate Debate**

The Twinbrook Citizens Association was selected by the City to host one of the three televised candidate debates in the 2009 election cycle. The debate, which was held on October 20<sup>th</sup>, at the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center, commenced with a session in which the two Mayoral candidates were asked identical questions in order to contrast their views on the issues. The ten Council candidates were asked targeted questions based on their public service records and campaign literature.

Turnout was outstanding and included residents from all parts of Rockville as well as many Twinbrook residents. This is the third election cycle in which the TCA was selected as a host organization. In 2005 and 2007 TCA partnered with Hungerford, Lincoln Park, East Rockville, and Burgundy Estates. The 2009 debate was shown live on TRC 11 and retelevised several times during the election season.

The 2009 election cycle saw an unprecedented interest by candidates in Twinbrook issues as well as a high level of door to door canvassing in the neighborhood by candidates and their campaign workers. The two freshman councilmembers are both former presidents of their citizens associations (College Gardens and West End), as is the new Mayor (East Rockville).

## **Mayor and Council Meet in Twinbrook**

Mayor Marcuccio and her Council held the first “neighborhood” Council meeting in Twinbrook on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010. The initiative to hold Council meetings outside City Hall is part of Mayor Marcuccio’s efforts to improve communication between the City government and City residents.

Residents from Twinbrook spoke during the Citizens Forum section of the meeting about installing new lights on Halpine, other concerns with crime, and about development issues. Since it was a normal Council meeting with a full agenda, citizens from other areas of the city also attended.

The meeting was televised on TRC 11 from the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center gym. It was an opportunity for the Council to visit Twinbrook’s chief Rec and Parks facility, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2009. The Center recently received new carpeting and paint, as well as other upgrades.

## **“Green” Twinbrook Supports National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat Initiative**

The City is supporting a citizen-led initiative to certify the entire city as a wildlife habitat. The initiative will need large institutions such as churches, schools and private commercial owners to certify, as well as homeowners.

Twinbrook already boasts a number of certified backyard habitats, including that of Anne Farrelly and John Goodman, who were the recipients of the TCA’s Garden Award in 2004 and of the Good Neighbor Award in 2009. They can be contacted at: farrelly@erols.com

## **Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) and the 2010 City Budget**

The TCA submitted 22 separate CIP requests to the City for the 2010 budget cycle. The requests were selected from recommendations from Twinbrook residents and members of the TCA executive committee:

### **Submitted requests included:**

*Sidewalk construction on upper Baltimore Road*  
*Designation of wooded strip on Halpine as a park zone*  
*Improvements to the flowerbed at Edmonston and Gilscott*  
*Upgraded lighting on Halpine and Ardennes*  
*Expansion of the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center*  
*Uniform traffic calming measures on Gruenther*  
*Community gateway signs*  
*Support for the Rockcrest Ballet Center renovation*  
*Renewal of the art installation on Twinbrook Parkway*  
*F. Scott Fitzgerald parking lot lights*  
*Aleutian Avenue sewer renovation*  
*SWM in-ground filter systems at the headwaters of Rockcrest and other neighborhood creeks*  
*Veirs Mill median strip tree replanting*  
*Edmonston Bridge renovation*  
*Identify sites within Twinbrook for art installations*  
*Install public function structures in Rockcrest and Calvin*  
*Create a Twinbrook park event*  
*More landscaping in Autre-St. Mary’s park*  
*Plant more trees in the Broadwood median strip (replace dying trees)*  
*Surveillance cameras at the shopping centers and at Lewis and Halpine*  
*Traffic Calming on Ardennes*

## **Montgomery County Board of Education visits Twinbrook Elementary School**

The County Board of Education held a Richard Montgomery cluster meeting at Twinbrook Elementary School on March 19, 2010. After the meeting, PTA president Cheryl Peirce and several representatives from Twinbrook’s PTA gave the board members (including Rockville resident Laura Berthiume) a tour of the school.

The tour focused on the elongated layout that makes it difficult to move students around, the un-graceful connection between the “old” and “new” parts of the school, the need for more ADA accessible bathrooms, and the need for specialized spaces (such as computer facilities and cafeteria service areas) more in line with current educational standards.

Twinbrook ES is in line to be renovated in the near future. The school was last renovated in the 1980s.

## **Join the TCA listserv!**

*email twinbrookpres@yahoo.com*

## **TCA Officers Join Task Force and Boards**

In spring 2010, two TCA officers were appointed to serve the City in advisory capacities. The TCA's treasurer, Richard Gottfried, was appointed to the "Budget and Finance Task Force" led by City Councilman Mark Pierzchala. The Task Force is one of two created by Mayor Marcuccio to improve the City's interactions with citizens.

Mr. Gottfried is CPA with a Masters in Taxation who teaches governmental accounting at local universities and has reviewed and testified on the Rockville City Budget for the past 4 years. Mr. Gottfried is on the task force subcommittee to make improvements to the budget book.

The TCA's Secretary, Dr. Steven Wilcox, was appointed by the Mayor and Council to the Board of Appeals. The Board, along with the Planning Commission and the Historic District Commission, regulates the implementation of zoning law in Rockville, especially special exceptions.

Dr. Wilcox has a Ph.D. in Operations Research, as well as M.S., M.B.A., M.A. and B.S. degrees in various scientific subjects. Dr. Wilcox also participated in "Imagine Rockville".

Congratulations! And thank you for your service!

## **Special Exceptions and Other Zoning Issues**

Several slow moving zoning issues are set to impact Twinbrook in the next few years. TCA is following four zoning cases in other parts of the City as the zoning law being implemented may also affect Twinbrook. The cases involve "special exceptions", which permit non-residential uses such as hospitals, senior housing, and religious institutions to be inserted into a neighborhood and to follow different zoning regulations than the underlying residential zoning.

In two of the four cases, the affected neighborhoods mounted strong, unified, and organized opposition (including legal action) to the projects which seem to have resulted in significant modifications to size, height, density, design, and other impacts. The modifications were NOT pro-actively advocated by our three zoning regulatory bodies: the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, or the Historic District Commission.

One result that will be immediately useful to Twinbrook and other neighborhoods is the acknowledgement by the City Attorney that citizens may attend (but not participate in) the meetings between developers and City staff known at Development Review Committee meetings. This is critical in order for citizens to be as prepared as the developers on significant issues when appearing before our three zoning regulatory bodies.

In addition, the City law known as the APFO (Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance) may be beginning to address development in Rockville. The APFO mandates that no new development be approved unless there is "adequate" school capacity, road capacity, police and fire service, etc. Since Montgomery County appears to be on the path to weaken or overturn its own "APFO"

regulations in favor of "Smart Growth", it may be that the City of Rockville retains the strongest APFO in Montgomery County. We are monitoring Rockville to see if they also try to water down the Rockville APFO ordinance. Proposed plans to modify or expand Twinbrook Elementary School and to reclaim Broome for MCPS appear to be linked to efforts to support the mega developments along Rockville Pike and at White Flint.

## **TCA Reviews Twinbrook Plan Process with Communications Committee**

TCA President Christina Ginsberg and TCA Vice-President Judy Miller met with Communications Committee members in April to review Twinbrook's experience with the Twinbrook Plan process. Identified issues with the planning process that concerned the TCA in 2006 and 2007 have been observed in other development proposals in other City neighborhoods.

The Communications Committee is the second of two Committees created by Mayor Marcuccio to improve the City's interactions with citizens. It appears that the Communications Committee will be recommending changes to how the City manages public input into the development process.

## **Is Your Home "HISTORIC" ?**

One of the most important new regulations in the RORZOR zoning code is the requirement that all buildings older than 50 years be reviewed by the Historic District Commission (HDC) for historic "significance" before a demolition permit is issued. On July 16, 2009, a "Twinbrook Ranch"-style house (split roof, as on lower Crawford or on Marshall) in Hungerford was reviewed (Staff reports and minutes can be seen on the City's website). In part, City Staff based significance on the fact that there were 600 similar houses in the neighborhood (from the minutes: "*asked about the significance of an individual house where there are 600 similar houses, staff noted that this aspect of similarity was a key aspect of historic significance.*")

Although the Historic District Commission voted 3-1 to designate the Hungerford house historically significant, later in 2009 the Mayor and Council declined to authorize the necessary zoning change.

As the single "no" vote in the 3-1 HDC decision, former Twinbrook resident and HDC commissioner Janet McCool noted (from the minutes) "*that she had lived in a house in Twinbrook and made significant renovations to make it more livable.*"

On March 18, 2010, the HDC declined to declare a house on Crawford "historic". TCA is vigilantly monitoring the "historic" process so homeowners are not caught up in an overly broad "historic" definition that would prevent improvements and bring down home equity and resale values.

## Green Building Code Changes

In February 2010, the TCA Executive Committee reviewed the proposed Green Building code changes. Based on the presentation by Charlie Baker, Chief of Inspection and Permitting Services, and Susan Swift, director of Community Planning and Development Services, TCA sent three recommendations to the City re the new code:

1. that all houses in the city be required to comply at a set threshold (1000sf, approximately where most Twinbrook houses would be required to comply under the “110% rule”).
2. that houses be exempted from installing green appliances (such as furnaces and water heaters) if such installation would require structural changes to a house.
3. that xeric green roofs be required on all new commercial buildings.

Our intent, as always, was to provide that Twinbrook and other small homes in other neighborhoods NOT be placed at a competitive disadvantage to other sectors of the city with larger homes in implementing this code.

Subsequent to our recommendations, a concerned citizen in West End discovered that the code would require retrofitting the entire house to comply with parts of the new code (including plumbing for sprinklers) if the threshold was exceeded.

In conjunction with the West End Citizens Association, TCA requested that the Mayor and Council review the proposed green building code in order to provide relief from the retrofitting proposals. The regulations did not distinguish between the two most common types of home renovations in Twinbrook: an addition which could easily be plumbed for sprinklers but where the original house would have to be ripped apart to install the necessary plumbing or a pop-up where the homeowners take off the roof to go up a story and the installation of plumbing for a bathroom on the second story would make sprinkler installation a relatively trivial expense.

Mayor and Council agreed and raised the threshold to 2000sf, effectively excluding most Twinbrook home renovations or expansions from the green building code retrofit regulations.

In most cases, it will be the responsibility of Twinbrook homeowners to decide whether to comply with the green building code. Although the future marketability might dictate compliance with most or all of the green building code, this compromise preserves the flexibility of homeowners.

It is not clear at this time whether the exemption for appliances will be enacted. Installations of water heaters, furnaces, AC, plumbing or electrical require inspection by Inspection and Permitting Services, who will determine whether new appliances, etc., comply with the new Green Building Code.

## TCA’s Goals for 2010:

- ❖ Monitor and influence the implementation of the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan and the Rockville Pike Plan
- ❖ Monitor the buildout of Twinbrook Station and insist on accountability to development agreements
- ❖ Continuing the greening of Twinbrook – including responsible storm water management, maintaining tree cover and establishing new amenities in our parks.
- ❖ Work on supporting our local schools and PTA to address the needs of our students here in Twinbrook, recognizing that great schools mean a great neighborhood
- ❖ Review and monitor transportation projects, especially the traffic mitigations associated with the Twinbrook Station development, including efforts to slow traffic on Twinbrook Parkway near Meadow Hall.
- ❖ Work to ensure that Twinbrook receives its fair share of city and county funding.
- ❖ Work to ensure that the Twinbrook neighborhood remains vital and dynamic without compromising property values or homeowners’ property rights.
- ❖ Provide informational seminars of value to our citizens on financial issues such the homeowners property tax credit.
- ❖ Continue expanding our networking with other community organizations to work on mutually beneficial goals for our citizens.
- ❖ Continue to monitor local crime issues and advocate for public safety

## JBG-Funded Traffic Mitigations Going Live

As part of the process of building out the Twinbrook Station development, the City and the developer JBG negotiated a series of staged traffic mitigations that must be implemented at the same time. With the building schedule getting more active, more monies will be available to the community. Community meetings have been held about the planned traffic mitigations on Twinbrook Parkway near Meadow Hall and on Edmonston. Upcoming projects include the creation of a sidewalk on Lewis Avenue.

JBG has already completed some work at Halpine and Ardennes and along Twinbrook Parkway adjacent to Twinbrook Station.

## General Membership Meeting and Election

Our annual election will be at our June General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, June 29, 2010, 7 PM at the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center, 12920 Twinbrook Parkway. Nominations need to be received by 5:00 PM June 9<sup>th</sup>. They may be submitted to Secretary Dr. Steven Wilcox at [spwilcox@acm.org](mailto:spwilcox@acm.org) or mailed to Twinbrook Citizens Association, P.O. Box 834, Rockville, Md 20848-0834. Nominations can also be made from the floor at the June 29 meeting.