

Fall / Winter 2018

inGaithersburg

**Working,
Playing &
Barking
inGaithersburg** Pg. 12

**WHAT'S NEW
IN OLDE TOWNE?** Pg. 6



Gaithersburg

Winter Lights Festival



Seneca Creek State Park, 11950 Clopper Rd.

Open Nightly Nov. 23 - Dec. 31 (Closed Dec. 25)

Enjoy a 3 1/2 mile drive through a winter wonderland featuring more than 400 magical displays and beautifully lit park trees.

Hours

6 - 9 p.m., Sun. - Thurs.

6 - 10 p.m., Fri. & Sat.

Admission

Mon - Thurs. - \$12 per car

Fri. - Sun. - \$17 per car

(see website for large passenger vehicles & bus fees)

Enchanted Evenings (All in a cozy, heated tent!)

Special Hours & Fees apply. See website for details.

S'more Lights Fri., Nov. 16, 6 - 10 p.m. . \$12 (Age 3 and under free)

Trolley rides, s'mores by the camp fire, hot beverages & live entertainment.

Bring your camera for a Selfie with Santa!

Wine Under the Lights Sun., Nov. 18, 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

General Admission Package \$20 . Tasting Package \$28

Samplings from Maryland wineries, hot beverages, snacks & live entertainment, plus open air trolley rides.

Leashes 'n' Lights Tues., Nov. 20, 6 - 8 p.m. . \$10 (Age 3 and under free)

Take your dog on an exhilarating walk through the lights followed by hot drinks & selfies with Santa.

Space is limited. Reserve early.

gaithersburgmd.gov

301-258-6350





City Officials

Contact these officials at 301-258-6310
or cityhall@gaitthersburgmd.gov



Mayor
Jud Ashman



Council Vice President
Ryan Spiegel



Council Member
Neil Harris



Council Member
Laurie-Anne Sayles



Council Member
Michael A. Sesma



Council Member
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The editorial content of *in*Gaithersburg is produced
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DATA WALK: HOW ELECTED OFFICIALS STAY INFORMED

BY BRITTA MONACO
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

On a chilly night in mid-April, a warm cup of leek soup was just what was needed as Gaithersburg's elected officials set out on a Data Walk. Organized by the City's Community Advisory and Educational Enrichment Committees along with Community Services Division staff, the walk allowed the Mayor and City Council members to do a deep dive into City-funded service programs that help residents who find themselves in vulnerable situations and those working to build financial security for themselves and their families.

Gaithersburg's elected officials set policy and approve funding on a myriad of topics, from authorizing an automated pavement assessment system and building a new playground to determining housing density and installing environmentally-friendly artificial turf fields. How do they inform themselves when the subject matters are so diverse? The Data Walk offers an excellent example.

We'll get back to that cup of soup in a moment.

One of the eleven elements of Gaithersburg's Strategic Plan, which is adopted by the Mayor and City Council as part of the budget process each year, is Community Services. It calls for the City to "address the human services needs and safety of all City residents through collaborative efforts with schools, businesses, organizations and nonprofits." Part of that plan involves grants to nonprofit organizations to provide direct service to residents.

"Each year we step back and take a look at our community to determine where the City's funding is most needed," says Anne Byrd, Chair of the all-volunteer Community Advisory Committee (CAC). "Through site visits, data analysis, census information and monitoring political and economic trends, we identify service areas

that we feel are in greatest need of funding, and then we make grant recommendations to the Mayor and City Council during the budget process."

The service areas currently identified for funding include Youth Enrichment, Health and Mental Health, Food and Nutrition, Vocational Coaching and Financial Wellness, Housing Stabilization for Homeless Individuals and Families, and Housing Preservation and Transportation. With more than \$700,000 in grant funding to be awarded, the CAC organized a Data Walk through these service areas to help elected officials see the full scope of the issues and understand the impact of their monetary awards.

"People learn in all sorts of different ways," says Mayor Jud Ashman. "I believe that the structure of the Data Walk helped us to better understand the way our social service endeavors work."

So it started with a cup of soup on a bus, "Manny" the Bus, to be specific. The Data Walk was held at Manna Food Center, one of three nonprofits that collaborate under the Nutrition grant to provide food and nutrition services. Before the elected officials entered the warehouse, they toured Manny, a school-bus-turned-cooking-classroom that goes to schools and into communities to offer hands-on cooking demonstrations and nutrition education for all ages. It also serves as a pop-up pantry to provide fresh produce to those with limited food access.

"More than 10% of employed people in Gaithersburg live below the poverty line, with food insecurity affecting 1 in 6 families," says Council Member Laurie-Anne Sayles. "I'm proud that our dollars are put to good use supporting and expanding not only food recovery but dignity as well. Talking to the nutritionist on the bus helped



The Mayor and members of the City Council are joined by service providers.

illustrate how our food and nutrition providers are helping residents in need. An added bonus – the delicious soup was made with low-cost, locally sourced ingredients!”

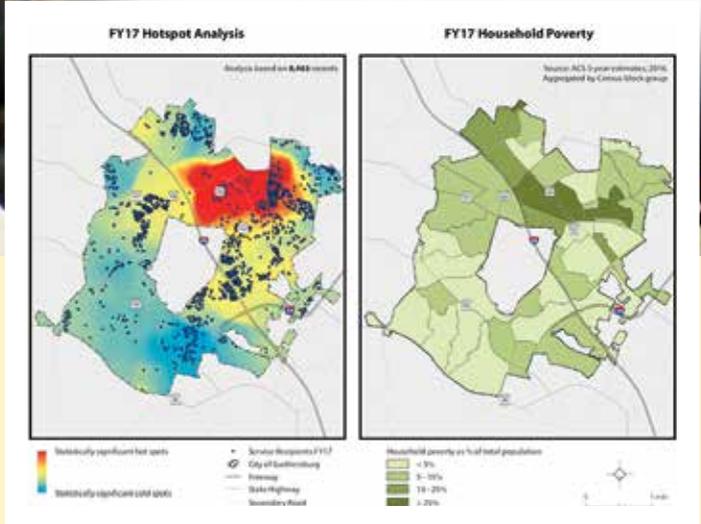
Once inside the warehouse, the Mayor and City Council members were divided up, each assigned to a walking group that included committee volunteers, nonprofit providers and partnering businesses. There were six stations set up throughout the warehouse, each representing one of the previously mentioned service areas. At each station, representatives armed with colorful fact-filled posters and charts talked with the elected officials, illustrating how they collaborate to spend the City’s money and telling them about the impact the grants have on their clients.

“One thing that really jumped out to me was how much our nonprofit providers do with relatively small grants,” says Council Member Neil Harris. “At the Health and Mental Health stop I learned that the City’s FY17 grant of \$123,000 was leveraged

with funding from other sources to help about 2,700 residents who might not otherwise have had access to health and mental health care. That’s pretty impressive.”

An important part of the evening was an exploration of these nonprofit organizations not just as service providers, but as businesses that are important to our community’s economy. “There are five organizations that collaborate on the Housing Preservation grant,” says Council Member Rob Wu. “I thought it was interesting to see that combined, these organizations pay close to \$300,000 in rent and provide 230 jobs. Collectively, that represents a pretty good-sized employer.”

“Six stops, six conversations, six learning opportunities, all in just sixty minutes. It was a lot to take in,” says Council Vice President Ryan Spiegel. “As elected officials, we’re certainly familiar with these organizations, but we don’t often get to see them all together in one place. It gave us a much better understanding of the unique collaborations that



are taking place to serve our residents.”

The City also uses the technology at its disposal to help elected officials understand the impact of their decisions. Grantees sign contracts that require service delivery and performance outcomes for a set number of individuals or families. Quarterly reports include the street addresses of those receiving services, verifying that the people being reached are within the City’s corporate boundaries.

In the last couple of years, the City’s Community Services and GIS Divisions have teamed up to provide maps that compare where the people who are accessing services live, and where pockets of poverty exist in our community based on census data. “We see these maps during our review of the

Strategic Plan, and it’s amazing how closely they align,” says Council Member Mike Sesma. “I think that’s quite a testament to the effectiveness of our service delivery and the positive way in which the City and its nonprofit partners collaborate.”

The Mayor and members of the City Council have a lot of homework to do to be effective legislators. Reading 100+ page packets before each Council Meeting is one way they digest information. Briefing papers, listening sessions, site visits – all of these play into their assembly of knowledge so they can be prepared to make the best decisions on behalf of their constituents. Now they can add a Data Walk to that information toolbox, a toolbox that sometimes comes with a cup of soup! 

What's New in OLDE TOWNE



BY SHARON DISQUE

BUSINESS SERVICES COORDINATOR, OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Despite its name, much of Gaithersburg's original center really isn't all that "old." And as new urban centers like Downtown Crown and King Farm crop up in the surrounding area, Olde Towne is emerging as a unique, vibrant neighborhood with its own small-town appeal. New housing, dining, public transit and recreational opportunities – a lot has changed here in the last few years. So what's new in Olde Towne, and what's coming?

How Does Change Happen?

Here's a quick lesson on what local governments can do to transform aging communities: (1) invest in public assets like parks and infrastructure; (2) support development projects that are doable – don't chase the impossible;

(3) use regulatory tools in fair and balanced ways to encourage owners to enhance and maintain private properties; and (4) work with local businesses and residents to make sure that those affected by change have a say.

Gaithersburg has consistently supported meaningful, incremental changes to Olde Towne using these techniques. Sometimes it's been an investment in a construction project or a contribution of City-owned land for a new use. Other times we created new recreational programming to enhance the area. Partnering with private businesses and nonprofits magnifies the impact of our many redevelopment activities.

Here are some key changes from the last few years and how they came to be.

People

New housing is vital to neighborhood revitalization. New construction replaces obsolete properties, eliminating blight. And when more people live within an area, local businesses see an increase in the demand for goods and services. That attracts new businesses and helps the existing ones thrive. With its unique environment and its access to public transportation, Olde Towne has seen a growth in new residential units with a wide range of prices.

Gaithersburg Station Apartments

Completed in 2013, this 389-unit, 4-star apartment complex along East Diamond Avenue was the result of a cooperative effort between private developers, the City and Montgomery County. Ten years ago the City received Enterprise

Zone status for Olde Towne (see more on Enterprise Zones below). This project took advantage of a key benefit – the waiver of development impact fees. For Gaithersburg Station, the waiver exceeded \$2.5 million. The City also provided a five-year tax abatement.

When this project was in its planning phase, the Olde Towne real estate market lacked robust demand for higher end apartments. City and County incentives helped to turn an impossible development into an economically feasible reality. In 2012, the property's value, based on the tax assessment, was at \$8.5 million. Today that value exceeds \$77.6 million.

Crossings at Olde Towne

In 2012, the City sold a former railroad site to a developer for construction of new apartments. It took a few years, but in 2017, the



The fully-leased Gaithersburg Station Apartments bring hundreds of new residents to Olde Towne.



Olde Towne Plaza is now a playful destination on a warm summer day.

Crossings at Olde Towne opened with 199 units, a pool, fitness center and club room. To accommodate parking for this uniquely shaped site, the City allowed the developer to expand an existing publicly-owned garage adjacent to the property. Along with the private developer's investment, construction financing of more than \$45 million came from multiple sources, much of it flowing through the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County. The property is fully leased, bringing new vitality to what was a vacant lot not all that long ago.

Places

Local government investment in existing buildings and open spaces directly affects the conditions of neglected properties. It's also a way to improve the quality of public services for area residents.

Olde Towne Plaza

For more than 15 years, the community has pondered redevelopment of the public space at the corner of Summit and Diamond Avenues. In 2014, the Mayor and City Council appointed an ad hoc committee to guide design of a new plaza. This group of com-

munity representatives established priorities – an attractive, flexible space for families – with the goal of creating a destination in Olde Towne. On the “must have” list: an interactive water feature and convenient parking, not just for plaza visitors but also to complement adjacent businesses. As a teacher at Gaithersburg Elementary School said one day while visiting the newly renovated space, “This is a beautiful amenity and a welcome addition for the kids in Olde Towne who lack access to a pool.”

We can use professional jargon like “placemaking” to describe the conceptual framework the group used to guide its recommendations, because that's the purpose behind these types of City investments. The \$2 million project included state grants of \$400,000. Visit on a summer evening and the Plaza's success is immediately apparent.

Constitution Gardens

A one-half acre municipal park, dedicated in 1988, was transformed into a unique, interactive nature play space in 2015. The park seamlessly incorporates historic references, including hand

carved animals denoting the City's agricultural past and a “Lost Library” story circle and lending library box marking the site of the original Gaithersburg Library. The project, totaling \$898,378, was funded by the City of Gaithersburg. As Mayor Jud Ashman envisioned when he spoke at the opening of the park, “this will be a social place – one of creative play, contemplation, and exploration. We invite visitors to make new friends, stretch their mind, body and soul, and, most of all, interact with the natural world, found right here in the heart of Gaithersburg.”

Incentives

Private investment in a neighborhood is the primary means to revitalization, and the City uses economic development incentives to encourage such projects. Whether exemptions from development fees – as mentioned in the above example of Gaithersburg Station apartments – tax credits or other variations on public-private partnerships, creative solutions are behind many of the changes in Olde Towne. City staff works with potential investors to package appropriate incentives.

Olde Towne Enterprise Zone

Enterprise Zones were established by the Maryland General Assembly to provide tax incentives to eligible businesses locating or expanding their facilities within a defined geographic area. Gaithersburg applied for Enterprise Zone status for Olde Towne in 2008. The ten-year designation was renewed in 2018. Although a State program, both City and County governments must agree to provide local real property tax credits.

Eligible projects receive these tax credits on the increased value, post rehab. Employers that add new permanent jobs are also eligible for income tax credits. In Montgomery County, investors can receive additional perks – waivers from affordable housing requirements, development and transportation impact fees, and credits on water/sewer improvement costs.

“The incentives afforded through the Enterprise Zone were instrumental in developing the property occupied by DNC Architects on East Diamond Avenue.”

Continued on page 11

FOREVER CONNECTED, Forever Sisters *in* Gaithersburg

BY AMY MCGUIRE, COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hailey, Gisselle and Maria are *Forever Sisters*, not related by blood but connected through a youth mentoring program designed to unite and empower young women. The group meets weekly during the school year at Gaithersburg High School (GHS) and inspires female students to fulfill their potential in all areas of life.

"*Forever Sisters* gives young women a safe space to be themselves and provides a network of friends they can rely on as they journey from adolescence to adulthood."

says Community Facility Manager Maura Dinwiddie. "The program fosters a culture of support, strength, and confidence in which female students can succeed."

"Young women today face many obstacles and conflicts and this program helps them," says Gisselle Servellon, an 11th grade student at GHS. "It's a safe place where you can go and just talk about how your day was and give each other advice about school and family."

It all began in 2004 when a concern was voiced about the lack of mentorship opportunities for female students at GHS. The City was asked if it could provide resources to administer a program

designed to unite young women through fellowship and support. Gaithersburg's Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture allocated funding through its Youth Services Division to address some of the challenges. Around the same time, the Youth Opportunities Coalition was established to serve area youth through recreation programs, mental health assistance, life skills training, academic enrichment, and commu-

nity involvement. It was through the Coalition that *Girls Lounge* was launched in 2007, becoming *Forever Sisters* in 2008.

"Youth who have a mentor are more likely to succeed in school, hold leadership positions, and have more self-confidence," says Maura. "Working with young women to increase these odds is particularly important because although the gender gap is closing, the reality is that it still exists."

The topic of discussion at one particular weekly meeting, selected from the girls' own anonymous submissions, was "beauty standards." Without disclosing the girls' personal thoughts



Photo courtesy of Alex Moran

and opinions (this is a safe space, after all), it's quickly apparent that while styles have changed, the pressures surrounding female appearance are more alive than ever. The girls open up about the negative impact social media has on self-esteem, how skin color is perceived in our society, and the fairness of who sets beauty standards.

"Some people might not have other people to talk to, so I feel like it's important to have a club that allows you to freely express your thoughts, knowing that the other girls will respect your privacy," says 11th grader Hailey Lee. "*Forever Sisters* brings us together and allows us to talk about what we want. Communication is so important, and so is getting other people's insights, and this program allows you to do these things."

"No one has all of the answers, but *Forever Sisters* creates a space where these women can safely ask life's questions," says Maura.

The weekly dialogues are open and candid – and they can go deep. The girls discuss a wide range of things, including intimate topics like home and family relationships, health and hygiene, teen pregnancy, and suicide.

When conversations go beyond their professional expertise, City staff will work under the guidance of school counselors.

"I have learned that we all have many problems that are relatable," says Hailey. "Sometimes the problems are about things that are only relatable to women, which showed me how important women empowerment is. I also learned that it's sometimes better to just talk it out than to keep it to yourself, because it will most likely help you feel better."

"It's useful to talk to girls who may be going through the same struggles you are going through," says recent graduate Maria Contreras. "This program ventures out of school-related problems and gives the opportunity to speak about personal ones and seek a solution."

In addition to weekly meetings, *Forever Sisters* hosts guest speakers, and together the girls go on field trips and participate in community service projects.

To further the bond, the program holds two retreats each year:

a winter "lock-in" and a spring overnight camping adventure. "The students experience an epic night of self-discovery through shared experiences and team-building and bonding activities," says Maura.

While the City funds the program, it seeks additional support for camping retreats and supplies. "We found many girls who would otherwise have loved to participate could not because of the prohibitive cost of essential camping gear like sleeping bags," says Grants Administrator Lauren Sukal. "We apply for additional funding every year to build up our inventory for future trips, allowing the girls to focus on bonding rather than having the right camping equipment." The City also partners with other GHS youth groups and the school's Wellness Center to provide staff resources for the retreats and field trips.

"I'm honored to have witnessed this program's success," says Maura. "I've seen quiet and reclusive students make friends and develop support systems that have lasted years beyond high school. I have watched struggling students persevere and go on to pursue higher education on hard-earned scholarships. And most significantly, I have witnessed young women in crisis seek out trusted peers and adults in the group in search of the emotional

support they need to persevere."

"It's important for young women to have an outlet to speak about their feelings and voice their opinions," says Maria. "Seeing how other members relate to your problems and how they cope, as well as hearing different perspectives on topics, can be very helpful and is why I encourage others to join."

Often times, those who graduate come back to participate in meetings and activities, proving that the nature of their bond is a strong one. "It's a sisterhood," says former member Rebecca Yobouet. "I'm now their big sister, and they'll look up to me and come to me, or anybody else running the program for advice, because there's a level of trust and consistency."

"No matter their age, no matter their school, no matter their life path, they will always be there for each other," says Lauren. "Forever connected as sisters." 



From left to right: Forever Sister Hailey, Facilitator Alex Moran, Student Union Member Christina, and Forever Sisters Giselle and Maria.

It's All about **PRESERVATION OF LIFE**

The Work of a Gaithersburg Fire Inspector

BY BOBBI FULMER

PERMITTING MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & CODE ADMINISTRATION



It's a cool, crisp autumn evening. Families are out taking a stroll through the neighborhood. The sound of children laughing and playing at the local park and dogs barking in the distance is suddenly muffled by the sound of sirens quickly approaching. For a brief moment time stands still as folks pause to consider where the fire truck may be going and why.

It's the job of the City of Gaithersburg Fire Inspectors to work to ensure that prevention measures are in place to reduce the possibility of a catastrophic emergency. It takes a special person to always put the needs and safety of others first, something our Fire Code Officials do every day. These Inspectors are members of the Permits and Inspections team, a division of the Planning and Code Administration, and they are responsible for ensuring properties within the City of Gaithersburg are maintained per adopted standards in order to pro-

tect residents, business owners and visitors.

While not a requirement, most of our Fire Inspectors have served as volunteers for their local fire department, providing them with exposure to the types of emergency situations that can result from poor fire prevention practices. Fire Inspector Rick Barnes started as a volunteer firefighter in Sandy Spring in 1983 and was hired as a career firefighter by Montgomery County Department of Fire and Rescue Services in 1987. He was later promoted to the rank of Master Firefighter, ultimately transferring to Fire and Life Safety Code Compliance for 15 years, logging 29 years of service at the time of his retirement – all of that prior to coming to work for the City of Gaithersburg in 2013. Rick maintains an invaluable knowledge base and unparalleled experience, which he proudly exhibits on a daily basis.

Says Rick, "One thing you can count on is never having a slow day!" While out in the field, Inspectors often observe code violations and must act accordingly to ensure they are corrected within a reasonable time frame. While addressing existing issues is essential, it's also the Inspector's job to complete inspections for issued fire permits. The City accepts applications and reviews plans for a variety of permits including fire sprinklers, fire alarms and hood and duct systems. Permit holders receive a list of mandatory inspections associated with their permit. When they're ready, they call the City's automated inspection line to request a visit. Fire Inspectors go on-site, making sure everything is in full compliance with the law. That already sounds like a full workload, so consider that our Fire Inspectors are also tasked with inspecting firework

displays, daycare facilities and even some of the amusement rides for the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair.

"One particularly important task we support is fire alarm testing," says Fire Code Inspector Mike Semelsberger. "We work with the property owner to schedule these ahead of time because they often occur before business hours, thus presenting as little disruption as possible to the employees, visitors and tenants." Property managers are required to provide notification of the alarm testing 24 hours in advance and they must post signs at all entrances to a building to notify occupants.

Life safety inspections are associated with most City permit types. These include making certain proper egress and ingress is maintained so visitors can enter a building safely and

exit quickly in the event of an emergency. These inspections are often scheduled in conjunction with other required building inspections, and they're typically the final fire inspection completed on a job site. The final building inspection will only be completed once the final life safety inspection has successfully passed. Then and only then is occupancy allowed.

Life safety requirements also include proper lighting and working fire extinguishers. These inspections can change from permit to permit depending on how the establishment is used. For example, the inspections for a home daycare facility are different than those performed for a commercial daycare facility. Mike explains, "An office in a commercial building has different occupancy needs than a

church, which is considered an assembly use and is the strictest of all code requirements."

When asked to consider the most common issues encountered while out in the field, Rick broke his response down into two categories: new construction and existing properties. For new construction, the Fire Inspectors' primary focus is on the quality of work of the general contractors and subcontractors, ensuring they pay attention to the expectations detailed in their permit and approved plans. For existing facilities, Inspectors make certain property owners and agents, along with their hired contractors, maintain the necessary life safety and fire protection systems according to the City's adopted standards.

An additional responsibility for Fire Code Inspectors is to work with the City's third-party licensing service to ensure property owners maintain their fire protection systems. This includes the testing and maintenance of fire alarms, private hydrants and emergency generators. In an effort to return a given property to a code compliant status, a property owner who does not maintain these systems may be issued a code violation.

Thankfully Inspectors work proactively to prevent the public from experiencing devastation caused by the lack of appropriate fire prevention measures. Recalling a time when the division's efforts helped to avoid possible injuries and property damage, Rick describes the discovery of a fully occupied

residential building in the City where the fire alarm was out of service. "We were able to assist management with the implementation of a fire watch for the short term and then provide guidance for a complete upgrade of the alarm system."

Often we take for granted the work of people like our Fire Code Inspectors and the knowledge and experience they have acquired throughout their careers. It is an expectation that buildings will be safe and not put visitors in harm's way. Rick, Mike and their colleagues are a necessary piece of the puzzle to help safeguard our community, allowing us all to rest a little easier at the end of the day. 🏠

What's New in Olde Towne *(Continued from page 7)*

says Economic Development Director Tom Lonergan. "The real property tax credits, in particular, were a substantial benefit, one that the property owner continues to realize to this day."

Economic Development Toolbox

"Toolbox" is the operative word when describing Gaithersburg's unique matching grant program. These incentives are geared towards existing businesses that exhibit growth potential and provide stable, well-paying jobs. Toolbox grants are one-to-one matches, paid as a reimbursement for eligible improvements. A \$50,000 limit applies; a business must invest at least \$100,000 to receive the maximum.

Most businesses use the Toolbox grant to offset costs associated with building improvements, signage and utility upgrades. Within Olde Towne, Toolbox projects have included Manhattan Pizza, Olde Towne Urgent Care and La Casita.

Other Incentives

The City has other ways to influence revitalization of retail and office properties. Public parking facilities; acquisition, demolition and sale of properties; expedited permitting; building code enforcement; project feasibility analysis; marketing; infrastructure – these are just a few of the techniques Gaithersburg has used in Olde Towne.

On the Horizon

Attention to Olde Towne continues with new investments in public facilities and continued support of private property owners and their efforts.

16 South Summit Avenue

A vacant office building at 16 South Summit Avenue presented a unique opportunity. With the demand for services increasing along with the City's population growth, the need for a larger public safety facility was identified. The Gaithersburg Police Department's current location in Olde

Towne at 14 Fulks Corner Avenue equals the size of about three houses. The City is in the process of converting the office building to a new municipal center, housing both the police station and new Council Chambers for our public meetings.

315 East Diamond Ave.

Back in 1998, the City acquired the "Fishman Property" for a specific purpose – eliminating a blighted, privately-owned building. Developers have made various proposals over the years, but none had the magic combination of a use that met City priorities and private sector market feasibility. This year, Ellisdale Construction received preliminary site plan approval to construct a mixed-use building and parking garage at this site along East Diamond Avenue. The residential section of the building will contain 109 dwelling units, including 10 studios, 70 one-bedrooms, 25 two-bedrooms and four one-bedroom ground floor walk-ups.

Government assistance, necessary to overcome the hurdles that have

prevented development, have included a State of Maryland grant for pre-development costs, City contribution of land, and County exemption from development impact fees.

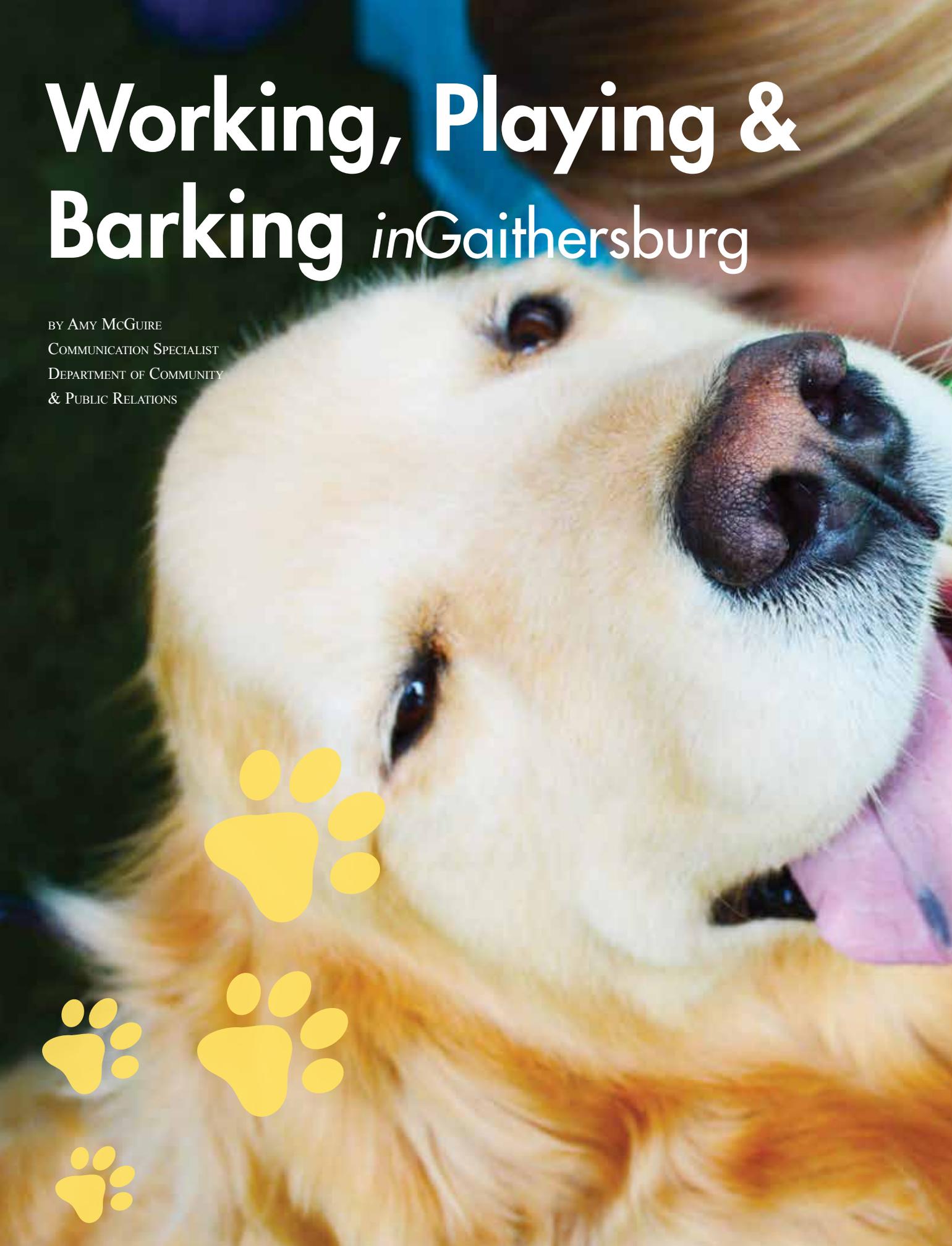
More Community Revitalization Tools

In May, the U.S. Treasury certified a section of Olde Towne as an Opportunity Zone. This new program offers investors significant Federal tax advantages. In 2018 the Mayor and City Council authorized a program that will support renovation of aging apartment buildings. Recent changes to the City's zoning ordinance will allow more businesses to occupy buildings, especially in the 400 block of East Diamond Avenue.

Here's what today's residents find in Olde Towne: a walkable community, connected via transit to major employers, with genuine retro amenities – from a weekly farmers market to free summer concerts. There's plenty of new life in Olde Towne. 🏠

Working, Playing & Barking *in* Gaithersburg

BY AMY MCGUIRE
COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
& PUBLIC RELATIONS



Joey apprehends a criminal suspect in hiding. Maggie helps keep City parks free of geese. Sherlock sniffs out bed bugs. For these working canines, it's just another "day at the office" in Gaithersburg.

The Gaithersburg Police Department has employed a canine unit since 2006, when Buddy joined the force as a narcotics dog with support from the Gaithersburg Police Foundation. Max followed in Buddy's paw steps in 2008, trained not only in narcotics but patrol as well. (Read Max's story in the spring 2013 edition of *in-Gaithersburg*.) The Belgian Malinois from the Czech Republic was the furrrier half of one of the Department's two K-9 units before retiring in 2017. "He is still adjusting to retirement and gets very jealous of Joey, especially when I'm getting ready to leave the house for work," says Police Officer Chad Eastman.

Joey's the new dog in town, along with Titus, another Belgian Malinois, who is handled by Officer Jonathan Bennett. Both are three-years old and are working hard to serve and protect City residents. "Titus and Joey have already had many drug finds leading to narcotics arrests," says Officer Eastman. "They have also made several apprehensions of criminal suspects who have fled or hid from the police."

The K-9 units always respond to crimes of violence, such as robberies and weapon offenses, as well as burglaries, thefts from auto in progress, foot and vehicle pursuits, missing persons, and any other type of call where it's believed the teams could assist investigating officers. "When not on canine-related calls we back up patrol units on other types of calls, such as disorderly persons, suspicious situations, and burglar alarm activations," says Officer Eastman. On average, the K-9 units respond to 140 calls per month.

"The good thing about police dogs is that they are a force equalizer," says Officer Eastman. "When the dog shows up on the scene, their presence alone can make people who might consider resisting or

fleeing change their minds and cooperate. Having the K-9 units on patrol and visible has undoubtedly affected crime deterrence in City neighborhoods."

Not only do canines help keep Gaithersburg safe, they also help keep it beautiful. Most would not argue that dogs and poop go hand-in-hand (please pick up after your pets!), but did you know that canines actually assist in keeping City parks fecal free? Thanks to eager border collies, geese who would otherwise take over public grassy areas and ponds are forced to find other places to nest.

"We use canines for goose abatement because it's recognized as the most humane and effective method of control," says Public Works Parks Maintenance Division Supervisor Charles Reed. "One goose can consume three to four pounds of grass and leave behind two to three pounds of fecal matter in a day."

Typically from March to October, a handler brings a border collie to the site to run. "This causes the geese to feel unsettled and fly away," says Charles. "The goal is to harass the geese just enough so that they don't feel comfortable and they leave our parks and ponds." This effective technique has been used in the City for more than ten years.

Canines also assist in keeping Wells/Robertson House, the City's transitional program for homeless men and women in recovery, a bed bug free facility. Used for their highly accurate sniffing capabilities, canines can detect all life stages of bed bugs, including eggs. "We conduct inspections every two months," says Clinical Supervisor Lee Jansky. Not only are the dogs amazingly accurate, they are fast and efficient. "It typically takes a dog about 30 minutes to sniff the whole house," says Lee.

And, while dogs play an important role in City services, Gaithersburg also provides its canine citizenry with plenty of amenities worth barking over. Exercise facility? *Woof!* Special events? *Yap! Yap!*

Free health services? *Bow wow wow!* Why, there's even "yappy hour" in honor of our four-legged friends.

We all need our daily exercise to maintain physical and emotional balance; dogs are no different. "The Dog Exercise Area is a great place where they can roam free and play off-leash," says Animal Services Manager Trevin Law. "Dogs meet and greet each other in a safe, fenced-in environment while their humans socialize and build friendships based on common interests."

Located in Green Park, the one-acre Dog Exercise Area is open to City residents, members and their guests. Dogs must be licensed either in Gaithersburg or their home jurisdiction. At the park you'll find benches, drinking water stations, waste bag dispensers, shade trees, and a pavilion with seating – everything you need for the perfect outing with your furry friend.

To help support a healthy canine community, the City participates in free, monthly rabies clinics for dogs (and cats!) at the Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center. "We understand how expensive vet bills can be, so we participate in this free County-sponsored service so pets are properly vaccinated," says Trevin. "Since the rabies virus can be present in the community, this program helps ensure our canine family members won't be able to contract it if they are potentially exposed."

With a pooch population of about 2,600 (based on licenses), dogs are

so much a part of the Gaithersburg community that special events revolving around them are popping up all around the City. Happy Hour in the Kentlands Mansion garden got a bit "yappier" with Canines and Cocktails. "Dogs play an important role in people's lives," says Community Facility Manager Kristy King. "We wanted to have an event in which dogs and their humans could come together to enjoy a beautiful evening while meeting neighbors and socializing their pups."

Pups are also invited to take a leisurely one-mile stroll or an invigorating three-mile walk through the Winter Lights Festival during Leashes 'n' Lights, a special "dogs night out" event in November featuring canine-related vendors and pet selfies with Santa.

For the last seven years, Gaithersburg has partnered with the Montgomery County Humane Society to present Paws in the Park, a one-mile dog walk and festival held at Bohrer Park at Summit Hall Farm in April. "Each year through Paws in the Park the local community raises thousands of dollars to assist homeless dogs and cats with food, shelter and companionship until forever homes can be found for them," says Senior Program Supervisor Andi Rosati.

Man's best friend plays an important role in Gaithersburg. They are our companions and coworkers. They provide unconditional love and talents beyond our human capabilities. They keep our City safe and happy. And that's something to bark about. 🐾



IS KENTLANDS a Haunted Mansion?

BY KAREN LOTTES
PROGRAM COORDINATOR, GAITHERSBURG COMMUNITY MUSEUM

Stories were relayed to the author by Juliana MacDowell, a descendent of the owners of Kentlands Mansion. Ms. MacDowell currently lives in Virginia and frequently attends events at this historic City-owned facility.

It was the end of October, 1991, and Juliana MacDowell couldn't help but be amused by the story that was unfolding before her. Kentlands Mansion had just closed as a Decorator Showcase and the designers on the third floor had a story to tell. One of the spaces up there, an elegant space with a palm tree, was adjacent to a space that was an homage to Hansel and Gretel. The designer of the Hansel and Gretel room did not appreciate coming in on multiple occasions and finding the palm tree in his space. It most certainly didn't fit the theme! And the designer of the room with the palm tree didn't

appreciate its repeated disappearance. Meanwhile, another designer was being "watched" by a ghostly woman in a long dress with her hair in a bun. Just what was going on?

According to Juliana these were just the latest in a long list of strange happenings in the house. As a child in the 1970s and '80s she spent much of her time living in Kentlands Mansion with Otis Kent, her great-grandfather, Helene Danger Kent, her grandmother and Otis' adopted daughter, her mother and siblings, and later her uncle. As a child she found the hauntings frightening; she experienced some herself and

heard tales of others. By 1991, she had outgrown her fear and was amused to hear that the ghosts of the Mansion were still around.

This history of Kentlands, once known as the Tschiffely Farm or "Wheatlands," dates back to the 19th century. The property was assembled from several farms purchased by Frederick A. Tschiffely in the mid-1800s. F.A. Tschiffely was an affluent business owner in Washington, D.C. who wanted to have a retreat to escape the unhealthy summers in the city (Washington was notorious for its malarial weather). He was in the forefront of affluent Washingtonians who looked

to Montgomery County as a bedroom community – a way for them to access the city easily while enjoying the healthy environment the country had to offer. Once the B & O Railroad was built and trolley lines expanded into the county, more and more Washingtonians had country homes to which they could retreat. Many of these men managed their farms, but didn't actively farm themselves, preferring to use tenant farmers to accommodate this lifestyle.

Frederick, Senior built himself a gracious mansion house, but the house we know as Kentlands Mansion today was built by his son, Frederick, Junior.

Frederick Jr. inherited the Home Farm in 1892 and immediately began to improve the property, expanding his land holdings substantially. In June, 1900, Montgomery County residents learned of his plans to build a brick residence at a cost of \$10,000, a significant amount at that time (about \$300,000 in today's dollars). He called it "Wheatlands," supposedly because of his primary crop, and it was central to the way of life he assumed as a "gentleman farmer." The mansion and surrounding property continued to be improved until Frederick Jr.'s death in 1931.

Use of the property by his heirs gradually declined. In 1942, they sold it to Otis Beall Kent.

farm, building new structures necessary to its running, dormitories for workers, and several lakes. Two of them, Lake Inspiration and Lake Helene, remain part of the Kentlands community. As a conservationist he turned much of the land into a wildlife refuge, banning hunting, fishing and trapping. After his death in 1972, the land was slowly sold off and new housing developments, communities and businesses were built. Today, Kentlands Mansion, owned by the City of Gaithersburg, is the centerpiece of the Kentlands community, a ground-breaking New Urbanist development.

Bear with us. We needed a little historical context before we could delve into the apparitions

there. Otis Kent's apparition has also been seen on a landing near a stained glass window.

Mr. Kent doesn't seem to be the house's only paranormal manifestation. Juliana, her grandmother, mother, the housekeeper, and others reported seeing an attractively dressed woman on the second floor and the staircase landing. Helene Danger Kent woke up one night to an open bedroom door, which was particularly odd since she faithfully locked her door every night. Through the open doorway she saw two women. One had her hand on the door knob and looked back at the other woman. Helene could clearly hear her say, "Don't worry about it. We'll fix it."

housekeeper. They all described the apparition as being in a lovely Victorian-style dress, which would certainly be appropriate to the time period in which the mansion was occupied.

Are these spirits still haunting Kentlands today or has its new life as a community meeting place changed things? Kristy King, Community Facility Manager for Kentlands Mansion, has worked there for the past 11 years. "I can't say that I've ever actually seen an apparition," says King, "but there is definitely a vibe in the building that constantly reminds you of its storied history."

In late October of 2018, Kentlands Mansion and the adjacent



By that time Kent had had a successful career as a lawyer, businessman and raconteur and he wanted to take on a semi-retired lifestyle. Changing the name to Kentlands, he embarked on an ambitious plan to not only expand the house and its surrounding structures but the land as well. Under his ownership the property grew from about 650 acres to more than 1,000.

He made two additions to the mansion, built a Fire House, and enlarged the Overseer's House (eventually home for Juliana, her mother Helene Kent Walker, and Juliana's many siblings). He set out to create a modern

that were seen and heard by Juliana, her family, and friends over the years.

Juliana grew up quite scared of the unexplained things that happened in the mansion. It isn't that any malicious paranormal activity took place, but just knowing there were ghosts was enough for her. And these were not ghosts who liked to be heard and not seen! Quite the opposite. Many people reported clearly seeing the figure of Otis Kent in what would have been his bedroom. On one occasion Juliana and a friend went upstairs and while both saw the silhouette of a man in the bedroom, no one was actually

She presumed these women were Tschiffelys. Usually when a place is inhabited by apparitions, we assume it is a person who either died in the house or experienced some terrible tragedy there. There is no clear occurrence of that happening. The women most likely to have died at the house are Dolly Brown Tschiffely, wife of Frederick, Jr. and his mother Elizabeth Ann Wilson, wife of Frederick Sr., and possibly his sister Linda Louisa, who was unmarried.

At other times a female apparition (perhaps the same woman, or perhaps different women) was seen by Juliana's grandmother, her brother, and the

Arts Barn (which once served as a horse stable) will be the subject of a Ghost Expedition by Maryland Paranormal Research®, which has been featured on Discovery Channel's Destination America. A team of researchers will use high-tech investigative techniques to illuminate the strange phenomena that have been reported around the estate. Perhaps Juliana will finally learn who else has been occupying her childhood home. 🏠

Celebrate **Fall & Winter** in Gaithersburg

For a complete list of performing arts, recreation classes, museum programs, gallery exhibits and other events and activities visit gaithersburgmd.gov.

Farmers Markets

Olde Towne - Fulks Corner Ave.

Thursday Afternoons thru Nov. 15

Kentlands - Main St.

Saturday Mornings Year Round

Oktoberfest

October 14, Noon - 5 p.m.

Kentlands Downtown & Village Green



Veterans Day Observance

November 11, 1 p.m.

City Hall Concert Pavilion

Winter Lights Festival - Open Nightly

(see inside cover for details)

November 23 - December 31, Hours Vary

(Closed 12/25)

Seneca Creek State Park

Special Nights (no cars allowed)

S'more Lights & Trolley Rides

November 16, 6 - 10 p.m.

Wine Under the Lights

November 18, 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Leashes 'n' Lights Dog Walk

November 20, 6 - 8 p.m.



92nd Annual Tree Lighting

December 1, 6 p.m.

City Hall Concert Pavilion

Gaithersburg Chorus

Winter Concert

December 2, 7:30 p.m.

Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church

December 4, 7:30 p.m.

Asbury Methodist Village



SEE AD ON
PAGE 18 FOR
MORE HOLIDAY
ACTIVITIES

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

January 21

Seneca Creek Community Church

Young Artist Award Concert

March 1, 7:30 p.m.

Rosborough Center - Asbury Methodist Village

19th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 16, 10 a.m.

RIO/Washingtonian Center

Green Month Environmental Celebration

Throughout the Month of April

Locations Vary

Paws in the Park Dog Walk & Fest

April 28, Noon - 4 p.m.

Bohrer Park at Summit Hall Farm

City Resources & Facilities

gaithersburgmd.gov

A list of direct dial phone numbers and e-mail addresses for employees can be found under the "About us" tab on the City's website.

RESOURCES

GAITHERSBURG CITY HALL

31 S. Summit Ave. 20877-2038
301-258-6300
cityhall@gaitersburgmd.gov

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

301-258-6310
cityhall@gaitersburgmd.gov

PLANNING & CODE ADMINISTRATION

301-258-6330
plancode@gaitersburgmd.gov

Animal Control
301-258-6343

Commercial & Residential Inspections Automated Scheduling
301-258-6338

Commercial, Residential & Fire Systems Plan Review
301-258-6330

Environmental Services
301-258-6330

Housing & Community Development
301-258-6330

Neighborhood Services
301-258-6340

Passports
301-258-6330

Permits & Licenses
301-258-6330

Planning & Zoning
301-258-6330

Rental Housing & Landlord Tenant Affairs
301-258-6340

COMMUNITY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

cityhall@gaitersburgmd.gov

Public Information
301-258-6310

Community Services
1 Wells Ave. 20877-2071
301-258-6395

Homeless Services – Wells/Robertson House
1 Wells Ave. 20877-2071
301-258-6390

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

301-258-6320
finance@gaitersburgmd.gov

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

301-258-6325
it@gaitersburgmd.gov

HUMAN RESOURCES

301-258-6327
hr@gaitersburgmd.gov

GAITHERSBURG POLICE

14 Fulks Corner Ave. 20877-2066
Non-emergencies: 301-258-6400
Emergencies: 911
police@gaitersburgmd.gov

PUBLIC WORKS

800 Rabbitt Rd. 20878-1600
301-258-6370
publicworks@gaitersburgmd.gov

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE

506 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6350
Fax: 301-948-8364
parksrec@gaitersburgmd.gov

FACILITIES

ACTIVITY CENTER AT BOHRER PARK, SUMMIT HALL FARM

506 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6350
parksrec@gaitersburgmd.gov

AQUATICS Gaithersburg Aquatic Center (indoor)

2 Teachers Way 20877-3423
301-258-6345
aquatics@gaitersburgmd.gov

Water Park (outdoor/seasonal)
512 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6445
waterpark@gaitersburgmd.gov

ARTS BARN

311 Kent Square Rd. 20878-5727
301-258-6394
artsbarn@gaitersburgmd.gov

BENJAMIN GAITHER CENTER

80A Bureau Dr. 20878-1430
301-258-6380
seniorcenter@gaitersburgmd.gov

CASEY COMMUNITY CENTER

810 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-4102
301-258-6366
caseycomm@gaitersburgmd.gov

COMMUNITY MUSEUM

9 S. Summit Ave. 20877-2071
301-258-6160
museum@gaitersburgmd.gov

CONCERT PAVILION AT CITY HALL (seasonal)

31 S. Summit Ave. 20877-2038
301-258-6350

GAITHERSBURG YOUTH CENTERS

Olde Towne
301 Teachers Way 20877-3422
301-258-6440
yc-oldetowne@gaitersburgmd.gov

Robertson Park
801 Rabbitt Rd. 20878-1657
301-258-6166
yc-robertson@gaitersburgmd.gov

KENTLANDS MANSION

320 Kent Square Rd. 20878-5726
301-258-6425
kentlandsmansion@gaitersburgmd.gov

MINIATURE GOLF COURSE (seasonal)

514 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6420
minigolf@gaitersburgmd.gov

SKATE PARK (seasonal)

510 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6359
skatepark@gaitersburgmd.gov



@GburgMD



Many facilities may be rented for meetings & social events. See website for details.



Holiday Festivities

Winter Lights Festival (\$)

Nov. 23 – Dec. 31
Seneca Creek State Park
See ad on inside cover for details & special nights

A Christmas Story (\$)

Presented by Rockville Little Theatre
Weekends Nov. 24 – Dec. 9
Arts Barn

Jingle Jubilee & Tree Lighting

Entertainment & Santa
Dec. 1 • 6 – 7:30 p.m.
City Hall Concert Pavilion

Gaithersburg Chorus Holiday Concert

7:30 p.m.
Dec. 2 - Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church
Dec. 4 - Asbury Methodist Village

Caroling in the Kentlands

with the Gaithersburg Chorus
Dec. 7 • 6 p.m.
Main Street Pavilion

All Aboard with Santa (\$)

Dec. 9 • 4 – 6:30 p.m.
Community Museum

Ugly Sweater Film & Brew “Die Hard” 30th Anniversary (\$)

Dec. 14 • 6 p.m.
Arts Barn

Cool Yule (\$)

Holiday Jazz with Lena Seikaly
Dec. 15 • 8 p.m.
Arts Barn

More information and tickets at
gaithersburgmd.gov

GAITHERSBURG Holiday Giving Program

Providing Food & Gifts to Local Families for
Thanksgiving and the December Holidays

- Donate money to help us buy gift cards and food
- Stuff gift bags with items for ages 12-18 (we supply the bags)
- Donate new glove, hat and scarf sets for children & older adults
- Volunteer

Donations can be made by check, cash and conveniently online with a credit card via the City's website. Search "Holiday Giving."

gaithersburgmd.gov
For information and donation forms contact
communityservices@gaithersburgmd.gov 240-805-1828



Benjamin Gaither Center

- FITNESS -

- TRAVEL/RECREATION -

- EDUCATION -

Monday – Friday, 8:30 am. – 4 p.m.

80 A Bureau Drive (Across the street from McDonalds)



301-258-6380 • gaithersburgmd.gov

BENJAMIN GAITHER CENTER

Please bring this coupon to the registration desk at the Benjamin Gaither Center to explore us for a day. Coupon entitles the bearer to access all free programs on the day of the visit. Other program fees may apply. Expires June 30, 2019.

ARTS ON THE GREEN

KENTLANDS MANSION & ARTS BARN

NOVEMBER — MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

IN CONCERT

Trisha Gene Brady
November 10

A singersongwriter known for her *mountain soul* sound.

Alessandra Cuffaro & Simeone Tartaglione
January 26

Virtuosic Violin an exciting program of Paganini, Kreisler & Sarasate.

Schumann, Brahms & Chocolate,
February 14

Piano Quartets paired with exquisite wines and SPAGnVola chocolates. Performance by New Orchestra of Washington.

Tim Whalen Quintet
March 2

A night of exceptional jazz on the Arts Barn stage.



Photo Paul Purpura

JUST FOR FAMILIES

Turkeypalooza
November 17

VF Dance Theater takes children on an exciting dance adventure.

The Brothers Grimm Excellent Adventure
January 19, 26 & 27

A wacky take on Grimm tales by The Landless Theatre Company.

Ourchestra
February 18

The Metropolitan Ballet Theatre brings the orchestra to life.

Family Art Workshops

Create art & craft projects as a family. Everything is provided, just come and have fun together.

- Fairy Tales • January 27
- Valentine's Day • February 10



ON STAGE

Catch Me If You Can
January 4 — 20

by Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert
In partnership with Montgomery Playhouse
An exciting comedy-whodunit.

Plaza Suite by Neil Simon
February 8 — 24

In Partnership with Sandy Spring Theatre Group
A trio of Neil Simon one-acts set in the Plaza Hotel.

Heathers (the Musical)
March 8 - 24

Music, lyrics, and book by Laurence O'Keefe and Kevin Murphy
In partnership with Rockville Musical Theatre
A rock musical based on the 1988 cult film.



Photo Kenneth C. Visser

ART NIGHT OUT

Labor Of Love (LOL): A Comedy Magic Show
November 16
Comedy, magic and mentalism collide with Kourosh Taie.

Comedy: Talib Babb
December 21

This local comedian has appeared on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert

#ShowLove Fest
February 10

In Partnership with Montgomery County Humane Society
Help homeless animals at this inspiring evening featuring adorable animal videos with host @PresidentPerine (Austin Perine).

Irish Arts Celebration
March 16

Celebrate Irish music, dance, literature, poetry and art.



301-258-6394 • Tickets: www.ArtsOnTheGreen.ticketfly.com
311 & 320 Kent Square Rd. • gaitthersburgmd.gov



ArtsontheGreen



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