

GCAAR Issue Brief

2015 Montgomery County Year in Review

Pesticide Restrictions

The Montgomery County Council approved a Bill to ban the use of pesticides on County-owned and private lawns. The bill also restricts the use of certain pesticides on public and private playgrounds, mulched recreation areas, and children's facilities. GCAAR expressed REALTOR® concerns to the Council regarding the original Bill's infringement of property rights, and cautioned the Council to take a more critical view of mandating how residents can care for their own properties.

Rapid Transit System

The Montgomery County Transit Task Force reconvened to organize and recommend financing of a rapid transit system. GCAAR members were selected to serve on a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to advise MCDOT and the state on issues such as design, coordination, and community needs. GCAAR testified at the public forum in support of the Rapid Transit System.

Design for Life

GCAAR supported a zoning amendment allowing increased density/townhome communities to include *Design for Life* projects, which make access easier for residents with disabilities. The goal is to expand housing options for homebuyers with mobility impairments, and allow those who might develop impairments to stay in their homes.

GCAAR supports tax credits for builders and homeowners to include accessibility features in new and existing residential housing, and agrees with the Council that additional incentives are needed.

Common Ownership Community Fees

The County Council passed a Bill requiring owners of units in Common Ownership Communities (COCs) to certify that COC fees have been paid before receiving a rental housing license. COC funds are used to maintain common areas, so unpaid fees result in a loss of property value for all owners. GCAAR worked with the Council to improve this legislation, and is pleased it passed with an amendment limiting COC fees to \$25. The Bill also allows associations to prove non-payment of fees with a recorded statement of lien.

Rentals

GCAAR testified against County legislation which would add strict and overly burdensome requirements for landlords. The bill would further complicate and restrict how all residential property owners can use their property and may negatively impact rental property values. Due to the extreme nature of the legislation, GCAAR commissioned a comprehensive analysis from NAR to support our position.

Montgomery County established a new “*County Renters' Property Tax Relief Supplement*” for its most vulnerable residents. Tied to the State of Maryland’s “*Renter’s Tax Credit Program*,” eligible renters would receive an average payment of \$125 per year based on the premise that a portion of the rent they pay is attributable to property tax paid by the owner. Eligible residents are at least 60 years old, those who are permanently and totally disabled, and in other limited circumstances.

Affordable Housing

GCAAR supported legislation to maintain a searchable Affordable Housing website of income-restricted housing units in the County. This giant leap forward will increase public understanding of the County’s affordable housing structure and make the pantheon of affordable housing options more accessible. The site also gives the government a better framework to develop new housing policies.

Green Bank

Montgomery County established a local “Green Bank” - a partnership with the private sector to increase investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Montgomery County’s Department of Environment is working with stakeholders, including GCAAR, on best practices to ensure the program is successful.