

GCAAR Issue Brief

2016 Montgomery County Year in Review

Transit

Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett announced his multi-year plan to make a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system a reality, focusing initially on the Rockville Pike and Route 29 corridors. BRT service would be available during peak traffic times with limited stops, hi-tech vehicles, and real-time arrival information. County funding for BRT will come from the six-year capital budget and is not expected to require a tax increase.

Business Community

GCAAR joined forces with a group of business leaders to form the Montgomery County Business Coalition. The Coalition is dedicated to improving Montgomery County's business climate with strong representation from the real estate industry – the Apartment and Office Building Association, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, and the Maryland Building Industry Association are all members.

Rent Control

Proposed regulations that would mandate standard leases and prolonged notice periods for housing providers did not pass. GCAAR stood in firm opposition to the Bill.

Sign Regulations

A proposed zoning amendment that would have banned all signs in the public right of way failed to pass. While the legislation's intent was to increase safety, it would have adversely affected the use of real estate signs. GCAAR worked with the Council and underscored that signs are a safe and low-cost way to communicate effectively with the public when regulated in a reasonable manner.

Radon Tests

A new law effective October 1, 2016 requires single-family homes in Montgomery County be tested for radon prior to closing. There are no remediation requirements. State law already required disclosure of known radon but the new regulation makes testing mandatory in the county. GCAAR was successful in lobbying for a number of amendments to the law, including exemptions for estate sales and demolitions. GCAAR also fought to ensure the new requirements could be met using a radon test kit available directly to consumers.

Vacant and Foreclosed Property

GCAAR supported a requirement for the Department of Housing and Community Affairs to maintain a registry of unmaintained vacant properties, which are subject to inspection. A civil penalty will be imposed for failing to register a property purchased through foreclosure within 30 days of the sale.