

THE HILLANDALE BULLETIN

May 2023

See us at: <http://www.hillandale-md.org/>

Published by the Hillandale Citizens Association, Inc.

Welcome Back!

Our last public meeting was in February 2020, but now after a pandemic-induced pause of three years, the Hillandale Citizens Association (HCA)—your neighborhood civic organization—is back!

FREE Sandwich Supper for Hillandale Residents, esp. New Residents!

Date: Sunday, May 21st, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Location: “We Achieve” Center (formerly CHI Center)

Address: 10501 New Hampshire Avenue (next to Hillandale Park)

We hope to re-boot our community organization with an unprecedented, free dinner for Hillandale residents! Please bring yourselves and your families! This is a great chance to get re-acquainted with neighbors and to meet new residents in the community.

New Residents, this will be an especially valuable opportunity to meet your neighbors and to learn more about Hillandale.

******RSVP:** Please email your name and the number of guests, so that we know how much food to order! **Email:** hca@hillandale-md.org **Thank you! We hope to see you there!**

Mission and Activities of the Hillandale Citizens Association (HCA)

* **Mission** – Since its founding in 1938, the HCA has endeavored mainly to help make Hillandale a better, safer, and more enriching environment for the people of Hillandale.

* **Public Forum and Information Resource** – The HCA serves also as your public forum for learning about developments in the community and for speaking about neighborhood issues that concern you.

* **Advocacy by HCA** -- The HCA advocates for the interests of the Hillandale community before the County Council and other venues.

* **Social Events** –

1) National Night Out (August): promotes community-and-police understanding.

2) Holiday Party (December) annual, well-attended community potluck dinner.

Dues-Based Voluntary Organization

The HCA is funded completely by annual dues of \$20 per household paid voluntarily by people who wish to become members. Furthermore, the HCA acts on behalf of the entire community, regardless of paid dues.

Appeal to the Hillandale Community

If you have been wondering how you might help the community, you will find that working with the HCA is a force-multiplier.

Our current slate of officers was elected or appointed in 2019 for two-year terms, which were extended for two years because of the pandemic. We hope to hold an election as soon as possible for a new slate of candidates. We need your help!

If you would like to volunteer your services, there is at the end of this newsletter a list of positions within our organization, all of which are open.

During this long pandemic, a number of members of the HCA Executive Committee moved on. Nevertheless, while in office, you all did great work, for which we thank you most sincerely! In addition, one of our most respected members—and representative for West Hillandale—Mr. Virgil Tudor—passed away unexpectedly in 2020. His contributions to the Hillandale community—where he grew up—were tremendous, and we all miss him greatly.

New Pedestrian Safety Improvements on Cresthaven Drive

During the long interlude of HCA activities during the pandemic, certain traffic problems have become apparent. One major issue has been the number of speeding vehicles on Cresthaven Drive, and in particular on the block by Cresthaven Elementary School.

Over the years, the HCA has gone through the proper channels in requesting safety improvements along this high-speed corridor. In particular, the HCA has requested two main things: 1) A four-way stop at the intersection of Cresthaven Drive and LaGrande Road; and 2) A painted crosswalk at the intersection of Cresthaven and Royal Road, which would ease access to the bus stop on Cresthaven for both school buses and Ride-On buses.

Our requests for these two matters were previously investigated and rejected by the Department of Transportation. However, in February 2023, the new County Councilmember Kristin Mink appealed personally to the head of Traffic Operations to give these measures a fresh look. Approval of the above two measures was announced on March 8th, and they should be implemented soon. These safety improvements will promote the county's "Vision Zero" project, which aims to achieve zero pedestrian deaths. **Thank you, Councilmember Kristin Mink!**

Improved Road Safety

The first of many steps to enhance safety on our local roads in Hillandale was completed in mid-April at the intersection of Cresthaven Drive and LaGrande Road by changing it to a four-way stop. Poor visibility and speeding from both directions at that location, with Cresthaven Elementary School nearby, provided the impetus for this remedy. The two major parallel roads that are parallel to Cresthaven--Royal Road and Schindler Drive have experienced similar reckless driving problems with narrow roads on the former and winding roads on the latter. There have been additional dangers to students as traffic overflows in front of Key Middle School during opening and closing hours, causing cars to pass on the wrong side of the road. Undoubtedly, these issues are evident in other parts of Hillandale, with the additional challenge of safely navigating New Hampshire Avenue, the physical dividing line between the eastern and western sections of Hillandale.

Hillandale United

In October 2021, a Hillandale resident named J.J. Green founded this neighborhood group, with the help of some other dedicated residents to address crime, promote neighborhood connectivity and beautification of our community.

Hillandale Park Renovation

Have you noticed construction equipment in Hillandale Park? This marks both an end and a beginning. It has been the much sought-after goal of the Hillandale community for many years, and it was approved finally by the Montgomery County Council in 2018.

Thanks to heavy lobbying by members of the Hillandale Citizens Association (HCA) and support of members of the County Council, especially Councilman Tom Hucker and his then-assistant, Brian Anleu, Hillandale Park is on schedule for a complete \$6.5 million renovation by the County, as a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) for FY 2021-2026.

When the Hillandale Park renovation is finished, hopefully in time for its scheduled re-opening in September 2023, it will be a wonderful, new full-fledged sports-, kid- and family-friendly resource for the Hillandale community.

Hillandale Park is centrally-located in the Hillandale neighborhood along the east side of New Hampshire Avenue, adjacent to the Hillandale Volunteer Fire House (Station 12).

New Features:

- * **Playground** -- New and expanded, multi-age playground with brand-new equipment. (The old, wooden playground was nicknamed "Splinter Park.")
- * The new playground will be "front and center" and more visible than the former playground, which is

tucked behind the fire station.

- * **Restrooms** -- There will be permanent restrooms. These restrooms will be near to a second picnic facility.
- * **A Second Picnic Pavilion with Seating.** This new shelter with accessible seating and adjacent, permanent restrooms will be a wonderful place for families and children to hold picnics.
- * **The Existing Picnic Pavilion**—also with accessible seating, and its accessible parking lot—is remaining unchanged.
- * **Lighted Basketball Courts** -- Two new, lighted basketball courts that will be separate from the tennis courts.
- * **Two Tennis Courts** – Are retained in their current location. However, they will be resurfaced and striped for tennis and/or pickleball. (Please see next article.)
- * **Walking/Exercise Trail** -- New, asphalt “Heart Smart” walking/exercise loop trail.
- * **Accessible Walkways**, including from the neighboring “**We Achieve**” **Center** (formerly the CHI Center)
- * **Soccer Field** - The large, multi-purpose field is being fully renovated and irrigated with storm management drains.
- * **Softball Diamond** is overlaid over part of the soccer field.
- * **Safety Improvements and Another Trail** -- Safety and grading improvements to the New Hampshire Avenue frontage and a new, shared-use trail along New Hampshire Avenue.
- * **Safe Entrances and More Parking** -- A new, safe drive entrance on northbound New Hampshire Avenue, plus 40 more parking places, for a total of 95.
- * **A Second, Safe Entrance to the Park** at the intersection with Chalmers Road. This stoplight-regulated intersection will serve as an additional, safe entrance to the park, improving safe vehicle entrances and exits.
- * **Accessible Walkway to “We Achieve” Center** (formerly the CHI Center) – Senior citizens at the “We Achieve” Center will be able to access the park from an accessible walkway. The two, 60-year-old cement staircases have been demolished.
- * **Numerous trees** will be planted, including a long line of trees to serve as a buffer between New Hampshire Avenue and the park.

Years of study and negotiations went into this project. Among other things, this park renovation will help to restore some measure of equity for the eastern part of Montgomery County which has been widely recognized as underserved for decades. This park renovation is part of the White Oak Science Gateway (WOSG) Master Plan.

In the end, the County decided that Hillandale Park on New Hampshire Avenue was ready, not for a less-expensive “Park Refresher,” which might have cost in the vicinity of \$2m to \$3m, but rather for a much more extensive “Park Renovation,” which is costing \$6.5 million.

The HCA wishes to thank especially the following individuals who wrote letters and spoke at public hearings in favor of the Hillandale Park renovations: Shana Davis-Cook (HCA Board), Eileen Finnegan (HCA Board), Heather Thomas (former HCA Secretary), and Margie Goergen-Rood (President of the HCA, current and 2016-2019). Thanks also to Ms. Linda Komes of the Montgomery County Parks Department, who designed the renovated park and presented these designs at our public meetings.

We, the HCA, are thankful for the soon-to-be renovated park and for the prospects it presents for improved livability of the Hillandale neighborhood in the future. We promise to monitor future developments concerning this park.

The newly-renovated park is scheduled to be re-opened in September 2023.

For further information, see this link:

<https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/BASISCAPITAL/Common/Project.aspx?ID=P871742>

This link shows some of the (successful) lobbying on behalf of the park by the HCA:

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/Resources/Files/Letter%20from%20HCA_HillandaleLocalPark%20to%20Council.pdf

Park Renovation Addendum: Tennis and/or Pickleball?

Montgomery County Parks is seeking feedback on the future of the tennis courts. Staff has determined that the courts have sufficiently deteriorated to necessitate replacement of the court surface. This work will be done as a part of the park renovation (this is great news, because the original plan was to leave the courts as-is).

In replacing the courts, the staff is considering how to proceed with pickleball and/or tennis striping. There are two courts. They can both be striped for dual use (tennis and pickleball), but then only tennis nets would be installed; OR they can paint one for tennis and one for pickleball. If they proceed with the latter, the respective type of net would be installed with accompanying striping.

Parks staff is welcoming feedback from the community on these options. The tennis courts were heavily used before the renovation was started, but pickleball is now in high demand. We should make sure the courts reflect the best possible uses for the community. Specific requests for the future courts should be sent to Park Manager, Richard Mallette at Richard.Mallette@montgomeryparks.org. Parks staff stressed that emails should be clear about the desired request.

Hillandale Gateway LLC

On December 9, 2020, Mr. Shane Pollin, who represented the Duffie companies, briefed the HCA Executive Committee by Zoom on the Hillandale Gateway LLC project. It will be built on the previous site of the Holly Hall apartment complex, that is, at the southwestern corner of New Hampshire Avenue and Powder Mill Road..

The Hillandale Gateway project will consist of two high-rise residential apartment buildings with an adjacent, connected parking garage. There will be several retail stores on the ground level. The site will also serve as a hub for buses.

These buildings will be built where the Holly Hall Apartments previously stood. Of the total of 463 units in the new development, 155 units will consist of affordable rental housing for seniors (age 62 and up). The remaining 308 rental units will be available to the general public, as a mix of both affordable and market-rate units. This new construction will add more needed quality housing to Hillandale.

Mr. Pollin demonstrated also that the Hillandale Gateway project fits extremely well within the parameters of Montgomery County's now-adopted General Plan Rewrite (Thrive Montgomery 2050). According to this plan, the long-term development of Montgomery County will involve building dense population centers along major traffic thoroughfares, which will be served also by increased mass transit. In this regard, the Hillandale Gateway project could well be considered a landmark project.

The HCA Executive Committee voted to approve of the project, subject to reservations aimed at improving the traffic flow and pedestrian safety within the project and along New Hampshire Avenue and Powder Mill Road. The project was approved by the County Planning Board, with conditions, on 18 February 2021. The construction permits are being amended and are expected to be issued soon.

See this website:

https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Hillandale-Gateway-Report-320180020A_120190220_-820190130_-1.29.21-FINAL.pdf

Please also see the website for Hillandale Gateway LLC:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/Resources/Files/Hillandale%20Gateway%20Spring%202022%20Community%20Update%20Release.pdf>

See also the updated report from the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery Co.

https://www.hocmc.org/images/files/committee/2022/Development_and_Finance_Committee_Packet_web_August262022_Version1_20220823.pdf

If you wish, you could also view this instructive video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGy4_VptHFs

National Night Out

On the first Tuesday of every August and across the United States, there is an event called "National Night Out." Many millions of Americans participate in this event each year, which brings together the community and local first responders to promote a spirit of mutual understanding.

National Night is always celebrated enthusiastically in the Hillandale neighborhood, and it is promoted actively by the Hillandale Citizens Association (HCA). This event was not held in the depths of the pandemic in 2020, but we held it in 2021 and again in 2022 at the West Hillandale Pool (915 Schindler Drive).

Both of these National Night Out events were hugely successful. A large crowd of people, including mostly families with young children, joined in the festivities. As usual, the Hillandale Volunteer Fire Department had a major presence, bringing out its vintage fire truck, its hook-and-ladder truck, as well as its ambulance. All of these vehicles attracted wide interest and led to many friendly interactions between the firefighters/EMTs and the public. In particular, many people were fascinated by the first responders who showed them around the ambulance.

Also on both National Nights Out, a contingent of Montgomery County police cars and motorcycles came roaring in with sirens blaring. Families swarmed around the policemen, took selfies, and engaged in innumerable friendly talks. This was a wonderful occasion for citizens to interact with police and other first responders on a person-to-person basis.

The event was marked also by visits of local and state officials. In 2022, we welcomed: David McBain, Commander of the 3rd Police District; David Moon (MD House of Delegates), and Will Smith (MD State Senate). In 2021, an unusually high number of elected county officials visited the event, including: Tom Hucker (then-president of the County Council), Brian Anleu, who was a candidate for the County Council 5th District, Lorig Charkoudian (MD state House of Delegates), Will Smith (MD state Senate), MC Sheriff Popkin, MC Police Chief Jones, MC Fire Chief Goldstein, and MC County Executive Marc Elrich. We had nice interactions all around, and several of these officials expressed a willingness to be invited to future HCA public meetings.

The HCA organized the event, which was made possible also with the great assistance of the West Hillandale lifeguards and administrators. The HCA also provided free ice cream and other frozen treats for the assembled crowd. These free treats were a huge hit with the perhaps 100 children present. There was also a food truck present, which served delicious dinner food. The HCA is indebted to the West Hillandale Pool for agreeing to host this event yet again. For 2023, the event might be held again at the West Hillandale Pool, though it might also be held at the Hillandale Swim & Tennis Association pool (10116 Forest Green Drive).

Look for Updates for this year's National Night Out on August 1!

The Corner

One of the un-sung accomplishments of the HCA is its caretaking of the small, half-acre green space that stands next to the Hillandale Shell station at the corners of New Hampshire Avenue, Powder Mill Road, and Greenacres Drive. For many years, the HCA has tended to this area, especially in keeping the grass and hedges in good trim, planting flowers that brighten the corner, and continually picking up the litter.

The HCA built and maintains the brick "Hillandale" sign at that corner. The well-built and well-maintained sign makes a good impression on passers-by. The HCA also installed and maintains two other, wooden signs: one along New Hampshire Avenue near McCeney Road; the other on the small, grassy island at the intersection of Powder Mill Road and Riggs Road.

The Hillandale community owes a big thanks to Mr. Mark Seney, the owner of the Hillandale Shell station for his support of the HCA's upkeep efforts at the Corner!

