

OCNA news

Vol 29, No 1 Spring, 2020
REVISED ISSUE

The OLD CATONSVILLE Neighborhood Association, INC.

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PANDEMIC GARDENING

Should we garden differently this year due to COVID-19? I think so. Here are some suggestions:

Garden More: Gardening has been demonstrated to reduce anxiety and depression. It also provides exercise without risk of spreading the virus, if you do it alone at home.

Increase Vegetable Plantings: We can get seeds and even plant starts by ordering online. Out of caution, remove the packaging outside and discard it, then wash your hands. A less safe option is to buy from local stores which have been exempted from closing. If you do that, maintain social distancing and wash when you return. Wipe down your steering wheel and anything else you touch. I was at Sun Nurseries a couple of weeks ago and wore gloves the whole time. They were very good about social distancing. We may be glad to have our own vegetables because eating those reduces the number of times you will have to leave your home for food. Anyway, home grown fresh vegetables are better than store bought, usually.

Use Labor-Intensive Methods: Since getting enough exercise while confined at home can be a problem, you might forgo using those power blowers and trimmers in favor of fully manual methods. Try composting instead of curb pickup of yard detritus. Use pruners to break up the bigger pieces.



Photo from Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Add Front Yard Flowers: Flowers will cheer up the neighborhood in this time of crisis. Also, while planting, you will have opportunities to socialize with neighborhood walkers...from a distance, of course. Optimists like me will emphasize spring blooming flowers because we think the pandemic will die down by summer. Try poppies, lilies, petunias, and other late-spring plants. After the frost date, plant tender flowers such as begonias and celosia. This may require you to start some indoors now, since we don't know how good the commercial supply of starts will be.

Please Share: Place thinned perennials and other extras at the curb, and then notify the hood through OCNA-group@UMBC.edu.

Feed the Birds with Plantings: Plants that produce a lot of seeds will draw birds. We have lots of different types of birds in our neighborhood now, so if they are not in your yard you need to up your gardening game to attract them. Purple finches, cardinals, blue jays, flickers, woodpeckers and blue birds are in the neighborhood, to name just a few. Also, plants with good nectar will draw hummingbirds. In return, the birds will entertain you in your social isolation. I watched two blue jays annoy a hawk the other day.

Please Share:
Place thinned perennials and other extras at the curb, and then notify the hood through OCNA-group@UMBC.edu.

Do Long Term Development: With extra time on our hands (some of us), think about what you can plant now that will benefit you in future years: trees to replace those that have died, shrubs that will enhance your fence lines. Currant, gooseberry, blueberry and quince will feed either you or the birds. These can be ordered online, or bought locally if you want to take the risk. Consider vines like the artichoke kiwi – which will fruit if you plant male and female – and the climbing hydrangea.

Enjoy. ■

by Larry Wilt

Editor's note: Feed the bees, too, and engage those kids! Some sites:

- <https://www.umaryland.edu/gogreen/news/green-spaces/plants-for-pollinators.php>
- <https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/grow-plants/10-gardening-projects-for-kids/>
- <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/gardening-with-kids-how-it-affects-your-childs-brain-body-and-soul>



Photo by Gary Bendig on Unsplash

Frederick Road Veterinary Hospital



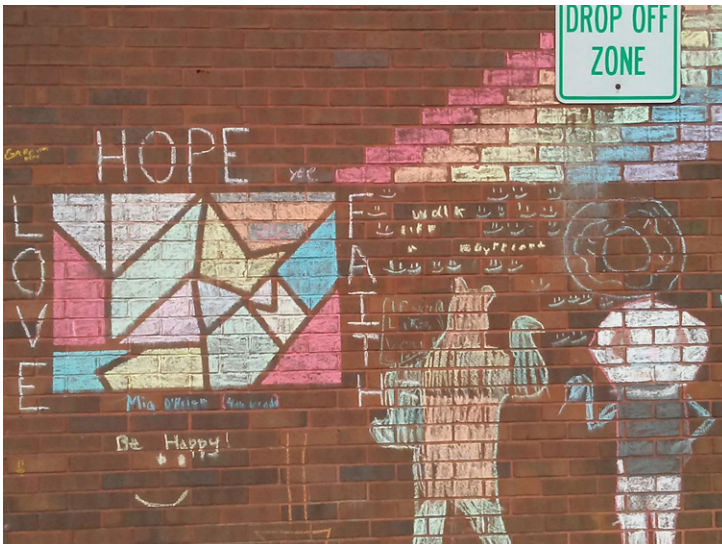
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OCNA IN THE TIME OF COVID 19



From teddy bear hunts to sharing supplies for mask-making to drawing hopeful messages on the walls of Hillcrest to Sunday Facebook Live broadcasts from the Presbyterian Church, to the simple act of staying home, OCNA neighbors are doing their part in this world-wide pandemic to stop the viral spread while staying sane and spreading joy. Personally, I have sort of appreciated the No. 11 Trolley Trail over the past 20 years, but now it is a lifeline—a peaceful canvas for the unfolding of this glorious Maryland spring of 2020.

To continue my pet topic of English Ivy, I occasionally pull up thin strands making their way up young trees on public lands, but I recently saw something that warmed my heart on the trails behind CCBC, on nearly every ivy-cloaked tree:

I'm so heartened to know of all those around us who care.



May you find joy and delight in this most unusual spring. ■

by Ann Quinn

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HISTORIC TAX CREDIT – MARYLAND STATE AND BALTIMORE COUNTY

Since 2005, Andy and I have applied for the Maryland Historic Tax Credit four times, succeeding in all but one - a new roof. With a choice of restoring the original cedar shakes (\$70,000) and or the 3-tab asphalt shingles presently on there, we decided to pass.

Maryland State will grant you 20% of the project's cost off of your income tax in the form of a rebate. Baltimore County applies the 20% tax credit toward your county property tax. Although Maryland turns around and taxes you on the rebate as income the next year, it's still money saved.

The entire process has evolved from submitting drawings with a few pictures after the work was completed, to a daunting, time-consuming three-stage process. Before any work begins, you must complete Parts I & II and receive approval.

PART I requires proof that you are in a historic district or are historically significant.

PART II requires submission of all estimated costs plus pictures of every square inch of your house with detailed labeling referring to accurate floor diagrams both digitally and in print. If they find anything not in compliance, you can send an addendum, which we did because gable vents are not allowed if not already in existence (also not that effective).



Graphic by Nicolas Raymond



PART III requires you repeat the process with the exact same picture views showing the completed work. The extensive photos are to ensure that you do not change any other part of your house during the process not in compliance with The Standards.

Judy Markowitz, who received the tax credit in 2017, informed me that there is a company – O'Connell and Associates (oconnellandasociates.com) – that will do all of this application process for you for a fee, which can be included as an expense in the application. To get the ball rolling,

- **for Maryland go to:** https://mht.maryland.gov/taxcredits_homeowner.shtml
- **for Baltimore County go to:** https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/planning/historic_preservation/taxcreditfaq.html

The County allows for projects as low as \$1,000. Maryland requires at least a \$5,000 price tag.

In my next article, I shall describe our two-year adventure in getting three systems of central air put into our 1880 home with four vastly different estimates and proposals. We do love the results as well as the tax breaks. ■

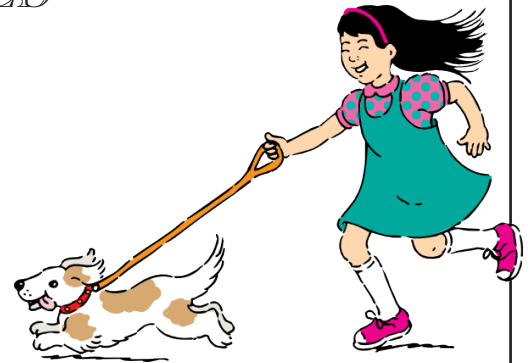
by Jane Bowie

NEIGHBORHOOD WORKERS NEEDED



Please e-mail Ann at annandsteves@gmail.com if you would like to be listed for jobs such as baby sitting, lawn-mowing, pet sitting, etc.

Please include your name, jobs you would like to do, phone and e-mail. A list will be published in the summer issue.



WRITING OPPORTUNITY!

Do you know how many writers yearn for readers, and how hard it is to get published? Now's your chance to be read by hundreds of neighbors who welcome your expertise. We are very grateful to Leslie for her years of beautiful writing and expert gardening, but she is ready to move on to other pursuits. Will you be our next columnist? Gardening, local events, history ... we're open to a wide range of interests. Please contact Ann at 410-747-4920, annandsteves@gmail.com to talk about possibilities. ■

by Ann Quinn

CES BUILDING RECEIVES PERMANENT COUNTY LANDMARK STATUS

Summarized by Jim Himel from "After years of debate over its future use, former Catonsville Elementary designated as county landmark" by Taylor DeVille, Baltimore Sun Media, March 10, 2020]

The Catonsville Elementary School and surrounding property on Frederick Road is now a Permanent County Landmark. In 2016, a Preliminary Landmark Application and supporting documents package was authored and shepherded by long-time OCNA neighbor and my good friend, David Wasmund (d. Dec. 11, 2019). Permanent Landmark status was sponsored by Councilman Tom Quirk and passed by the County Council in March 2020. This Landmark effort was initiated to block the county from demolishing the building in 2016 and to keep the building available for a Community Recreation and Arts Center.

Preserving Bloomsbury Middle, Establishing a Community Center, but then...

Back in 1995, David, along with a huge community effort blocked the demolition of the former Bloomsbury Middle School by having that historic building also protected with Permanent Landmark status. In 2005, the County spent over \$15 million to create the Bloomsbury Community Center. A decade later, CES was a déjà vu of what the County had attempted at Bloomsbury. CES was decommissioned in 2016, leaving the building vacant and students were sent to a new \$30 million elementary school in the just-remodeled-for-\$15 million Bloomsbury Community Center, a move that displaced dozens of community recreation programs there. With the closure of Catonsville's Bloomsbury Community Center, residents called for the CES building to house the displaced Catonsville Recreation & Parks Council programs, and to provide a Baltimore County Arts venue. The County response was a quick demolition plan and a no-design metal-clad replacement shack for recreation programs. Our community response was to Landmark CES.

The County refused to consider another \$15 million for a Bloomsbury Community Center replacement for Catonsville at CES but did budget \$2 million for 2 new ball fields at Spring Grove. In 2018, BCPS announced that it would continue to use the CES facilities for administrative offices. The building is currently used for administrative training services, with gym space



Photo from Friends of the Restored Catonsville Elementary School on Facebook.

and adjacent ball fields available for Baltimore County Department of Recreation programs. BCPS did bring the CES building up to ADA compliance including the installation of an elevator.

History of CES site

The 57,692-square-foot CES building was originally built in 1909 as Catonsville High School. This Frederick Road site was previously the Remus Adams Blacksmith Shop, which was owned and operated by Adams, a Black freeman since before the Civil War. The Catonsville High School was then converted to an elementary school in 1926 when the high school was moved to a new building on Bloomsbury Avenue, on the site of the Catonsville Country Club. (The club house was used as the high school cafeteria until it burned.)

For many OCNA families, the former school's landmark designation is personal. Generations of children from our neighborhood attended CES and parents were involved in school programs for over 100 years. "There are many community residents who are interested in repurposing CES as a community arts and entertainment center," Char Brooks told the Baltimore County Council during a public hearing in February.

Rezoning to Neighborhood Commons filed

This year, Councilman Tom Quirk filed a zoning change request to establish a "Neighborhood Commons" (NC) designation for the 6 acres of land surrounding the ball fields behind the building to shield the parcel from potential future development. Properties designated neighborhood commons cannot be developed, regardless of what the underlying zoning allows. The OCNA Board supports this zoning change.

Given the Catonsville renaissance that is happening now, it is appropriate and important to have the CES building landmarked, and the underlying zoning changed to NC, because this large public building is more than the focal point of Frederick Road, it is the soul of this community. In the recent Baltimore Sun article paraphrased for this article, Char Brooks said she was “cautiously optimistic” about future conversations regarding the school building. Under County Executive Johnny Olszewski, Jr.’s leadership, Catonsville was designated in November as Baltimore County’s first Arts & Entertainment District. This is in addition to the formal recognition of Catonsville by the State Legislature as “Music City, Maryland.” Jim Himel said he thinks the County Administration would be open to changing the CES use. “Coming down Frederick Road, it is the biggest public building in the central business district,” Himel said. “You want a focal point for the A&E district. Any elected official should want to be able to cut a ribbon to open the Catonsville Community Recreation and Arts Center and proclaim, “This is Catonsville – Welcome to Music City, Maryland.” ■

by Jim Himel

[Jim Himel and Cheryl Wasmund are officers of the Catonsville Community Conservation Association (CCCA), the group which sponsored and submitted the Landmark applications for CES in 2016 and for the Bloomsbury Middle School in 1995.]

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LIFE IN THE OCNA AREA & CATONSVILLE CIRCA 1900



In the area of OCNA & Catonsville circa 1900, there was no I-695 beltway, or Route 40, not even a Catonsville High School...at any of its eventual three different locations! But the business center was already established along Frederick Road, that will change, and at the same time, keep unchanged the very soul of this village.

Also, the Short Line Railroad and trolley lines on Frederick Road and Edmondson Avenue are in place to transport the families and materials to grow this community through most of the 20th century.

Only a handful of Victorian homes appear in what eventually will be the OCNA neighborhood. Most of the neighborhood in 1900 consisted of farms planted in corn and tobacco, not trees or lawns. The new home lots that do appear are 1-2 acres; enough to accommodate a large garden and grass to fuel a 1-horse-powered carriage. And the Melvin Ave Water Tower was an open reservoir



MELVIN AVENUE WATER TANK

Q: What's a quick way to tell the age of an old tree in your yard?

A: The age of your house. (No, millennials, not the age of your mom & dad!) Chances are that the big old trees adjacent to your house and other nearby homes were planted around the same year that the houses were built. The big old Silver Maple trees on Beechwood and Beaumont are probably no more than 100 years old. Any earlier than that, they would be corn stalks!! ■

by Jim Himel

THE OLD CATONSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION DUES DRIVE

YES, I want to support the OCNA community with dues. Please register me as:

- \$15.00 Family Dues
- \$10.00 Individual Dues
- \$5.00 Senior Citizen Dues (family or individuals over 65 years of age)
- Sponsorship Level – to give a little extra! (Please specify amount.) _____


Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

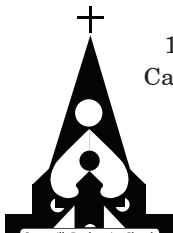
E-mail address (optional): _____

Please drop off dues to Robert Croom at 16 Osborne



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NEIGHBORHOOD SCAVENGER HUNT



Take a walk, breathe in the fresh air, and stay 6 feet apart. Look around and see how many of these you can find. In addition, if you choose, draw your own map and mark where you've found each. Do a few a day or all at once, add your own, and riff from here to adapt beyond the boundaries of this list. Feel free to share with friends in other places to see if they can find some of these or add other items unique to where they live. Have fun, stay safe and healthy! ~ Charlie, Meg, Terry and Robyn

The neighborhood in Catonsville, MD bounded by Beaumont Avenue, Dutton Avenue, Frederick Road and Edmondson Avenue.

- 1. Walk 200 steps from your house and mark it on the map
- 2. An apartment building
- 3. A street sign at an intersection, with 2 streets that begin with the letter "S"
- 4. All the numbers 1 through 10 (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10)
- 5. 5 things that are yellow
- 6. The street with no drains (and only partial sidewalk)
- 7. A driveway or staircase to nowhere

- 8. A house with two doors on the front
- 9. A house with a turret
- 10. A semi-circular driveway
- 11. Listen for 3 different birdcalls, describe what you hear or imitate it

a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____

- 12. A cardinal
- 13. A sidewalk crack
- 14. 2 libraries
- 15. 4 types of trees: 1 with flowers, 1 with leaves, 1 with needles, 1 that's bare
- 6. 3 street drains
- 7. 4 fire hydrants
- 8. A bike
- 9. "Life is Great in 21228" Bumper sticker
- 10. A pinecone

- 11. An acorn
- 12. A gate
- 13. A path that is not covered by pavement
- 14. A bent street sign
- 15. A brick house
- 16. A crosswalk or speed bump
- 17. A place of business
- 18. 4 flags
- 19. A decorative wreath
- 20. A tree covered in ivy
- 21. Flowing water
- 22. Two of these: a porch swing, a backyard swing and a playground swing
- 23. 4 different things on wheels
- 24. A tree stump
- 25. 7 stop signs
- 26. A shamrock
- 27. 2 bus stops
- 28. A birdfeeder or birdhouse
- 29. A statue in the front yard
- 30. Baltimore Orioles flag, bumper sticker, decal or merch (on a hat or T shirt)
- 31. A lacrosse net or basketball hoop
- 32. An arrow – painted or on a sign
- 33. The whole alphabet on signs

- N _____
- O _____
- P _____
- Q _____
- R _____
- S _____
- T _____
- U _____
- V _____
- W _____
- X _____
- Y _____
- Z _____

- A _____
- B _____
- C _____
- D _____
- E _____
- F _____
- G _____
- H _____
- I _____
- J _____
- K _____
- L _____
- M _____

- 34. “For Sale” or “For Rent” sign
- 35. Dead-end street
- 36. One-way street
- 37. A newspaper
- 38. A star
- 39. An out-of-state license plate
- 40. A yard that is covered in something other than grass
- 41. A picnic table
- 42. A bus
- 43. Holiday decorations past the holiday
- 44. A satellite dish
- 45. A string of lights
- 46. A historical marker – a sign that mentions historical significance of a place or event
- 47. Sign that says “Music City Maryland”
- 48. A bike rack
- 49. Chalk art
- 50. Person jogging or walking a dog. ■

by Charlie, Meg, Terry and Robyn Cavanaugh