

# Commonly Interested Newsletter



Montgomery County, Maryland  
Commission on Common Ownership Communities  
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Read on our Website

September 2023

## BUY NOTHING PROJECT

*Give. Ask. Gratitude.*

[www.buynothingproject.org](http://www.buynothingproject.org)

The Buy Nothing community: it's a win-win-win (You, Montgomery County and the environment)

The Buy Nothing project unites people in local communities with the common goal of giving and receiving free goods and services. The guiding principles are simple and universal: reuse, recycle and regift. From old magazines to used baby items, furniture, kitchen gadgets, everything in between, and even foods and toiletries, people post items that they are

ready to part from and within hours, these items are picked up by others who want them. People also post ISO (In Search of...) ads and are often lucky to find what they are looking for within their community.

It all started when two friends, Rebecca Rockefeller and Liesl Clark, living on an island in the Pacific Northwest discovered that much of the beachscape around them was spoiled by a daily influx of disposed plastic items, plastics of every shape, color and size. They quickly learned that those plastics come from us, from our homes, our cars, our backyards and our workplaces. And so, a rallying cry against excess stuff was born.

Inspired by the ancient practice of gift economies, where neighbors share and pool resources, a community-building social movement emerged. The idea was to stave off pervasive plastics in every ecosystem on Earth by encouraging each of us to buy less and share more. While the creators were alarmed with the plastics that wash into the beaches and oceans around the world, this project is all about reducing trash of any type and repurposing or recycling anything that can be salvaged or reused.

The first Facebook Buy Nothing Project group was launched in a small town in the Puget Sound islands off the coast of Seattle in 2013. The founders never expected it to become a viral sensation with millions of enthusiastic participants in many countries. Today there are 128,000 communities around the world with more than 7.5 million members and counting. Maryland is a home for more than 120 Buy Nothing communities. On their website, the Buy Nothing ethos reads "We exist to build resilient communities where our true wealth is the connections forged between neighbors."

The Buy Nothing project introduces an environmentally conscious 7-step guide that teaches us how to buy less, give more, and live generously. At once an actionable plan and a thought-provoking exploration of our addiction to stuff, this powerful program will help you declutter your home without filling landfills, shop more thoughtfully and discerningly, and let go of the need to buy new things.

To join the millions of responsible citizens who care about their environment and want to save money, search "Buy Nothing" on Facebook and find your local group. You can also download the Buy Nothing app to your phone and use it outside of Facebook.

**For more information, visit [BuyNothingProject.org](http://BuyNothingProject.org)**

*By Galia Steinbach*

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## A Huge "Thank You" to Board member volunteers.

In Montgomery County, MD, there are over 1,300 Common Ownership Communities which make up approximately 40% of the county's housing stock. Developers continue to identify and pursue the possibilities of continued growth in community associations due to its proven success and demand nationwide. A community association could not be successful and enticing to homebuyers and residents without the proper governance and leadership of the individuals that step up to the plate. These individuals are known as Board of Directors, which are generally comprised of homeowners. They are elected volunteers which commit their time and resources to carry out the best interest of their community, while managing and resolving complex and sensitive issues. Many COCs also have Board appointed committees to aid the Board of Directors, committee members are also homeowner volunteers that have a desire to help for the greater good of their community.



Unfortunately, volunteers and their dedication sometimes go unnoticed, but their involvement and commitment are priceless and instrumental to ensuring property values are maintained and that community harmony remains a key ingredient to community association living. If you have a desire to make a difference or would like to contribute to the success of your community, please consider a volunteer position with your community.

A huge Thank You to all Board and committee members for your continued partnership in making Montgomery County, MD a desirable place to live and raise families.

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## Annual Registration of Common Ownership Communities



As you may already be aware, the county code, chapter 10B requires that common ownership communities be registered with the County's Department of Housing & Community Affairs on an annual basis. [The office of Licensing and](#)

[Registration](#) has mailed out renewal notices for compliance. If you have not submitted your renewal [application](#) and the associated fees, please do so immediately. Below is some important information you will need to provide.

- \* Community Information
  - \* Contact Information
  - \* Structure Type Information
  - \* Board President Signature
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# Budget Season...

As many associations begin to prepare and adopt the FY24 budget, it is important to remind Board members to review the governing documents that define the community's responsibilities. In addition, please carefully review and consult with your professional(s) on the applicability of current State and County laws. Furthermore, make sure that you review your current Reserve Study and allocate recommended contributions to your budget accordingly. If your reserve study does not include a structural inspection and/or a preventative maintenance plan or schedule, you should review and consider a consultation with your professional and inquire about the benefits of incorporating such information. Another critical component to your budget should be Maintenance and Repairs. Make sure you allocate adequate funding to extend the lifespan of your community's amenities and infrastructure. Finally, please make sure that your community members are provided with detailed information as part of the budget dissemination. Input from community members should be reviewed and considered by the Board of Directors.



# Mandatory Board Training



In July 2023, [amendments to the county code](#) continue to require all Board of Directors for common ownership communities to successfully complete the Commission's Board Training program, also known as Community Governance Fundamentals. The new provision requires Board members to recertify every *three (3) years*. Therefore, if you have not completed the training after July 3, 2020, you are required to fulfill this requirement. Information on the free training program and [schedule](#) may be found on the website or [click here](#).

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## COC Links and Shortcuts

[Office of Common Ownership Communities | DHCA \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)- General information and resources for common ownership communities and homeowners.

[Common > "Community Governance Fundamentals" Training Program | DHCA \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)- Mandatory training on Community Governance Fundamentals.

[Common > Registration of Common Ownership Communities | DHCA \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#) – Mandatory annual registration of common ownership communities.

[Calendar | DHCA \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#) – Calendar of Events.

[Common > Community Information | DHCA \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#) – FAQ's

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