Now well into our 13th year, Conservation Montgomery is an all-volunteer 501c3 nonprofit. Our board of directors accomplishes the Conservation Montgomery mission with support from donations and volunteers. Tax-deductible financial support from donors allows us to continue activities like those outlined below.

**Environmental education and increasing awareness in the community**

As we learned to live with Covid-19 safely, we were able to restore a few of our pre-pandemic activities in 2022. We promoted awareness and environmental education by participating in person again at community events. We held Home Tree Care 101 (HTC 101) spring and fall classes. Certified arborists teach these hands-on classes to help homeowners learn about caring for trees on their private property. With proper care, trees -- the work horses of the environment -- can live longer and be less hazardous in severe weather. The classes are held outdoors in neighborhoods throughout the county. We thank the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection for supporting this program. And we are proud to note that HTC 101 is a strategy in the **Montgomery County Work Plan, FY22**. (page 12)

We held spring and fall **Big Tree Tours** in 2022, guided by Joe Howard. The group viewed big trees in the Kensington and Chevy Chase sections of the county. We are grateful to Joe for leading the events over the past 10 years. And we are pleased to announce Wheaton resident Ed Murtagh as the recipient of the **2022 Joe Howard Environmental Award**. This past spring, we participated in the 4th **Naturally Latinos** conference and staffed a community table at **Greenfest 2022** at Brookside Gardens. Leading up to the Montgomery County Primary elections, we partnered with seven other nonprofits to host a nonpartisan **Green Forum** for all County Executive Candidates so we could help voters become well-informed before heading to the polls. The Green Forum was well attended.

**New Board Members**

We were delighted to add three new board members to our Board of Directors in 2022 — Luis Gonzalez, Vanessa Pinto and Cornelius Kuteesa (pictured left to right below). Each new board member brings a wealth of environmental and community outreach experience to Conservation Montgomery. Learn more about Luis, Vanessa, and Cornelius at ConservationMontgomery.org.
Advocacy and community involvement

Throughout the pandemic, our stellar Advocacy Committee monitored issues this year. The committee has participated in Planning Board hearings, meetings with County Council members and interactions with county agency officials. We track the issues and send Action Alerts when it’s time for you to contact elected/non-elected officials and make your voice heard.

Official County Tree: We began 2022 testifying before the County Council to support legislation to designate an official county tree. The Black Tupelo (Nyssa sylvatica) is now the official Montgomery County tree. We hope this will encourage residents to plant more of these adaptable shade trees to increase tree canopy in our county.

Ten Mile Creek/Clarksburg Bypass: The fight to protect the Ten Mile Creek watershed is ongoing. We’ve worked for years with Friends of Ten Mile Creek to preserve forests and streams in the watershed. The County Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission originally promoted a destructive alignment for the MD 355/Clarksburg Bypass -- in violation of the 2014 Ten Mile Creek Master Plan. The County Executive directed DOT to maintain compliance with the Master Plan. The Planning Board eventually changed course and approved the alignment initially requested, thus reducing impacts to forests, streams and wetlands in the Ten Mile Creek headwaters.

Improving Tree and Forest Laws: Conservation Montgomery, along with partner organizations, have advocated for stronger county tree and forest laws. Existing laws are the county Forest Conservation Law (FCL), the Tree Canopy Law, and Roadside Tree Protection Law. This October, the County Council held a public hearing on proposed legislation to amend the FCL. CM supported the proposed amendments and requested additional provisions and stronger language to protect existing forests and increase re-planting requirements. CM submitted testimony supporting the position of the Montgomery County Forest Coalition, a group of local and regional environmental organizations which encouraged the County to embrace a no-net loss of forest policy in the hope of a net gain of forest outcome. The Council Transportation & Environment Committee is tentatively scheduled to have a work session on the legislation. For more information on this, please visit the Audubon Naturalist Society blog on the topic.

Thrive 2050: Our Advocacy Committee spent many hours in 2022 advocating for a better update to our General Plan, last amended in 1993. The Thrive 2050 Plan, proposed as the update, is under review by the County Council. This document came to the Council from the Planning Board and has been the subject of fervent debate for reasons that include lack of full public participation, lack of transparency in process and violations of public meetings act regulations. Thrive promotes blanket urbanization and sprawl while purporting to increase housing and create compact communities. The plan proposes that we continue to grow at the expense of our environment, ignore the public health threat of climate change and promote up zoning throughout the county. Nonprofit groups have united to request that the Council pause Thrive until all stake holders are included in a fair process. CM joined a diverse coalition of organizations and individuals requesting a pause in passage of Thrive 2050. Note: The Council did not produce the plan - yet Council members are responsible for voting and adopting it for our communities. We joined 36 groups and over 209 individuals requesting a pause and the addition of Council public hearings. The County Executive and Department of Environmental Protection support our position. At this writing, we had requested that the Council not vote, as planned, on Thrive 2050 on October 25th. The recent upheaval, that prompted the Council to ask for the entire Planning Board to resign and remove the Planning Director, indicates Thrive was drafted in a government agency with internal problems that may have affected the quality of work delivered. Montgomery County deserves a General Plan that has not been conceived by a dysfunctional government agency. We remain hopeful that the Council will act wisely to reconsider Thrive 2050 with a new Planning Board and Planning Director.

For more information on this and other CM activities, please visit ConservationMontgomery.org.