



Committee: T&E
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Livhu Ndou, Legislative Attorney
Purpose: Final action – vote expected
Keywords: #CountySymbols #CountyTree

AGENDA ITEM #13B
March 15, 2022
Action

SUBJECT

Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree – Established

Lead Sponsor: Council President Albornoz at the request of the County Executive

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Adriana Hochberg, Acting Director DEP, Climate Change Officer
Frank Dawson, Division Chief, DEP
Laura Miller, Forest Conservation Coordinator, DEP
Doug Sievers, Forest Conservation Advisory Council

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS

Roll call vote required

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

Bill 48-21 would officially designate a County tree.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Bill 48-21 would designate *Nyssa sylvatica*, commonly known as black tupelo (also known as blackgum, sourgum, pepperidge, tupelo, and tupelo-gum) as the County tree.

This report contains:

Staff Report	Pages 1-5
Bill 48-21	© 1
Legislative Request Report	© 3
County Executive Memorandum	© 4
Department of the Environment Memorandum	© 6
Fiscal Impact Statement	© 8
RESJ Impact Statement	© 10
Economic Impact Statement	© 12
Testimony	
Conservation Montgomery – support	© 14
Bob Nelson – against	© 15

Alternative format requests for people with disabilities. If you need assistance accessing this report you may [submit alternative format requests](#) to the ADA Compliance Manager. The ADA Compliance Manager can also be reached at 240-777-6197 (TTY 240-777-6196) or at adacompliance@montgomerycountymd.gov

M E M O R A N D U M

March 10, 2022

TO: County Council

FROM: Livhu Ndou, Legislative Attorney

SUBJECT: Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree – Established

PURPOSE: **Action** - roll call vote expected

Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree - Established, with Lead Sponsor Council President Albornoz at request of the County Executive, was introduced on December 14, 2021 and a public hearing was held on January 18, 2022. Action is scheduled for March 15, 2022.¹

Background

Bill 48-21 would designate a County tree alongside the already-designated County bird (the robin) and blossom (the dogwood). The Forest Conversation Advisory Committee (FCAC) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recommend *Nyssa sylvatica*, commonly known as Black Tupelo (also known as blackgum, sourgum, pepperidge, tupelo, and tupelo-gum). The Black Tupelo was chosen after discussions with various organizations, including Montgomery Parks, the Montgomery County Forestry Board, the municipalities, as well as public outreach. The Black Tupelo was chosen unanimously by the FCAC, who noted its adaptability, ecological value, and long life. Photos of the tree are below:

¹#CountySymbols #CountyTree



*images from Tree Montgomery:
<https://treemontgomery.org/tree/tupelo-black->

Public Hearing

One speaker, a landscape architect and member of the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Advisory Committee, testified in support at the public hearing. He testified that the Forest Advisory Committee at the request of DEP engaged in a thorough process of identifying criteria to evaluate a potential species, holding meetings with stakeholders, and soliciting public feedback before choosing the Black Tupelo. He testified that it was chosen for its adaptability and brilliant range of fall foliage.

The Council received a letter in support from the Conservation Montgomery Advocacy Committee. The written testimony states that the Black Tupelo is a long-lived native species that is a primary component of Eastern forests and occurs naturally throughout the County. It is adaptable to a wide range of soil types, light conditions, and moisture availability, and has

“outstanding” fall color and winter silhouette. Testimony also notes that it is an excellent choice for habitat restoration, for planting around homes and buildings, and as a street tree if given adequate root space and planted away from overhead wires.

The Council also received a letter in opposition. The letter-writer asked the Council to instead choose the Goshen Elm. According to the written testimony, the Goshen Elm is the largest English Elm in the country, with a 24-foot circumference, 115-feet tall, and 113-foot average crown spread. The testimony noted that there is already a Goshen Elm Conservation Park, which is .27 acres and surrounds a Goshen Elm. Less than a half-mile away from the Park is the historic African-American community of Stewartown and the Goshen United Methodist Church, which has roots in the Stewartown Church formed over a century ago. A photo of the tree is below:



Champion Goshen English Elm Tree

Discussion

As noted during the public hearing, the process for selecting a County tree was led by the Forest Conversation Advisory Committee (FCAC), at the request of DEP. Initial discussions between DEP and FCAC began in October 2020. The FCAC used the following selection process:

- November 2020 – Identified criteria to evaluate potential species.

- January 2021 – Identified organizations to engage and consult for input on criteria and species.
- February through May 2021 – Hosted meetings with representatives of the following groups:
 - February – Montgomery Parks
 - March – Montgomery County Forestry Board
 - April – Municipalities in Montgomery County
 - May – Montgomery Planning
- June 2021 – The following steps occurred during the month of June:
 - The criteria were finalized and included the following:
 - Available for purchase
 - High ecological value
 - High likelihood of adapting to climate change
 - Importance of local cultural uses
 - A large-tree species
 - A long-lived species
 - A species native to the mid-Atlantic Piedmont
 - To narrow the choices, the Committee members voted anonymously to rank the 13 tree species recommended throughout the process. The top 3 species were, in order of most votes:
 - Black Tupelo, *Nyssa sylvatica*
 - American Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*
 - White Oak, *Quercus alba*
 - DEP presented two survey questions to the public designed to gain feedback about the criteria and top three species. The survey was promoted on all social media platforms during Chesapeake Awareness Week. A total of 57 responses were received from the public. The public feedback was reviewed and discussed.
 - The Black Tupelo, *Nyssa sylvatica*, was nominated and unanimously approved by the FCAC.

DEP notes that the Black Tupelo met all the identified criteria. It is highly adaptable, growing about 1 foot each year in almost all conditions. It will likely adapt well to changing climate conditions. In autumn, it displays an attractive range of orange, red, and purple colors. As it ages, its distinctive bark resembles alligator hide. And it produces a small, cherry-like seed favored by wildlife. The Maryland Big Tree Program and the Montgomery County 2021-2022 Register of Champion Trees show that the current county champion black tupelo is also the current state champion.²

A letter in opposition requested that the Goshen Elm be selected as the County tree. The Goshen Elm, an English Elm (*Ulmus procera*), is Maryland’s only Millennium tree at over 200 years old. It is located in Gaithersburg, MD at the Goshen Elm Neighborhood Conservation Park. The Goshen Elm Protection Area and the Goshen Elm Conservation Park were dedicated on September 15, 2001.

² Champion trees are the largest known tree of a given species in a particular geographic area.

Council Staff recommends selection of the Black Tupelo as the County tree. While Council Staff recognizes the historical significance of the Goshen Elm, the Black Tupelo went through a rigorous process for its selection, including important factors such as its availability for purchase, its high ecological value, and being a native species.

<u>This packet contains:</u>	<u>Circle #</u>
Bill 48-21	1
Legislative Request Report	3
County Executive Memorandum	4
Department of the Environment Memorandum	6
Fiscal Impact Statement	8
RESJ Impact Statement	10
Economic Impact Statement	12
Testimony	
Conservation Montgomery – support	14
Bob Nelson – against	15

F:\LAW\BILLS\2148 General Provisions - County Symbols\Action Memo.Docx

Bill No. 48-21
Concerning: General Provision – County
Symbols – County Tree – Established
Revised: 12/1/2021 Draft No. 1
Introduced: December 14, 2021
Expires: June 14, 2023
Enacted: [date]
Executive: [date signed]
Effective: [date takes effect]
Sunset Date: [date expires]
Ch. [#], Laws of Mont. Co. [year]

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsor: Council President Albornoz at the request of the County Executive

AN ACT to:

- (1) officially designate a County tree; and
- (2) generally revise County law regarding County symbols.

By amending

Montgomery County Code
Chapter 1, General Provisions
Section 1-405

Boldface	<i>Heading or defined term.</i>
<u>Underlining</u>	<i>Added to existing law by original bill.</i>
[Single boldface brackets]	<i>Deleted from existing law by original bill.</i>
<u>Double underlining</u>	<i>Added by amendment.</i>
[[Double boldface brackets]]	<i>Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.</i>
* * *	<i>Existing law unaffected by bill.</i>

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Act:

1 **Sec. 1. Section 1-405 is amended as follows:**

2 **1-405. County bird, [and] blossom, and tree.**

3 The robin is the [county] County bird. The dogwood is the [county] County
4 blossom. The black tupelo (also known as black gum, sourgum, pepperidge,
5 tupelo, and tupelogum), *Nyssa sylvatica*, is the County tree.

LEGISLATIVE REQUEST REPORT

Bill 48-21

General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree – Established

DESCRIPTION:	Bill 48-21 would specifically designate a County tree as well as generally revise County laws regarding County symbols.
PROBLEM:	There is no County tree.
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:	Designate a County tree
COORDINATION:	Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
FISCAL IMPACT:	Office of Management and Budget
ECONOMIC IMPACT:	Office of Legislative Oversight
RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTIC IMPACT:	Office of Legislative Oversight
EVALUATION:	To be researched.
EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE:	To be researched.
SOURCE OF INFORMATION:	Livhu Ndou, Legislative Attorney
APPLICATION WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES:	Not applicable.
PENALTIES:	Not applicable.




OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

November 3, 2021

TO: Tom Hucker, President
County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive 

SUBJECT: Introduction of XX-21, County Tree Designation

I am transmitting the attached legislation, XX-21 Official Designation of a County Tree. The legislation modifies the County's current law to designate an official tree alongside the already designated County bird and blossom. The Forest Conversation Advisory Committee (FCAC) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recommend *Nyssa sylvatica*, commonly known as black tupelo (also known as blackgum, sourgum, pepperidge, tupelo, and tupelo-gum) be designated through the accompanied proposed amendment to Article 4 Section 1-405 of the County Code as a County Symbol for Montgomery County.

The black tupelo was unanimously supported by the FCAC to be designated as the official Montgomery County Tree. While the black tupelo is slightly less well known than Maryland's State Tree, the white oak, the designation of black tupelo will both celebrate the species and promote all trees. It is a highly adaptable species, growing about a foot each year in nearly all conditions. It will likely adapt well to changing climate conditions.

In the autumn, the black tupelo displays a range of brilliant orange, red, and purple colors. It produces a small cherry-like seed that is favored by wildlife. As the tree ages, its distinctive bark can resemble alligator hide.

The Maryland Big Tree Program and the Montgomery County 2021-2022 Register of Champion Trees show that the current county champion black tupelo is also the current state champion. It is located on private property in Cloverly.

I have attached a memorandum from our former Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Introduction of XX-21, County Tree Designation

November 3, 2021

Page 2 of 2

Director Adam Ortiz that provides more detailed information about the criteria used to make the tree selection.

I appreciate your prompt consideration of this action.

ME:ao



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Adam Ortiz
Director

MEMORANDUM

September 29, 2021

TO: Marc Elrich, County Executive

FROM: Adam Ortiz, Director 
Department of Environmental Protection

SUBJECT: Introduction of XX-21, Official County Tree Designation

The attached legislation, XX-21 Official Designation of a County Tree modifies the County's current law to designate an official tree alongside the already designated County bird and blossom. The Forest Conversation Advisory Committee (FCAC) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recommend *Nyssa sylvatica*, commonly known as black tupelo (also known as blackgum, sourgum, pepperidge, tupelo, and tupelogum) be designated through the accompanied proposed amendment to Article 4 Section 1-405 of the County Code as a County Symbol for Montgomery County. The process for selecting the County tree was led by FCAC, at the request of the DEP.

The FCAC completed the following steps to nominate the black tupelo as an official County Symbol:

- October 2020 – Held initial discussions regarding the request by DEP and agreed to act upon the opportunity to recommend a species to designate as the official county tree.
- November 2020 – Identified criteria to evaluate potential species, as well as several potential species.
- January 2021 – Identified organizations to engage and consult for input on criteria and species.
- February through May 2021 – Hosted meetings with representatives of the following groups. The individuals who participated provided deeply thoughtful comments that contributed significantly to the criteria and species considered.
 - o February – Montgomery Parks
- March – Montgomery County Forestry Board
- April – Municipalities in Montgomery County
- May – Montgomery Planning
- June 2021 – The following steps occurred during June:
 - o The criteria were finalized and include the following:
 - Available for purchase
 - High ecological value

- High likelihood of adapting to climate change
- Importance of local cultural uses
- A large-tree species
- A long-lived species
- A species native to the mid-Atlantic Piedmont
- To narrow the choices, the Committee members voted anonymously to rank the thirteen tree species recommended throughout the process. The top three species were, in order of most votes:
 - Black tupelo, *Nyssa sylvatica*
 - American sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*
 - White oak, *Quercus alba*
- DEP presented two survey questions to the public designed to gain feedback about the criteria and top three species. The survey was promoted on all social media platforms during the Chesapeake Awareness Week. A total of 57 responses were received from the public. The public feedback was reviewed, discussed, and considered very positive. The Committee is available to review the feedback in detail at your convenience.
- The black tupelo, *Nyssa sylvatica*, was nominated and unanimously approved by the FCAC.

The black tupelo meets all the criteria identified and was unanimously supported by the FCAC. While the black tupelo is slightly less well known than Maryland's State Tree, the white oak, the designation of black tupelo will both celebrate the species and promote all trees. It is a highly adaptable species, growing about a foot each year in nearly all conditions. It will likely adapt well to changing climate conditions. In the autumn, the black tupelo displays a range of brilliant orange, red, and purple colors. It produces a small cherry-like seed that is favored by wildlife. As the tree ages, its distinctive bark can resemble alligator hide.

The Maryland Big Tree Program and the Montgomery County 2021-2022 Register of Champion Trees show that the current county champion black tupelo is also the current state champion. It is located on private property in Cloverly.

If you have any questions, please contact Frank Dawson at 240-777-7732 or via email at Frank.Dawson@montgomerycountymd.gov or Jason Mathias at 240-405-6499 or via email at Jason.Mathias@montgomerycountymd.gov.

AO:jm

Attachments

Fiscal Impact Statement
Bill XX-21 – Official County Tree Designation

1. Legislative Summary.

Bill XX-21 designates the blackgum tree, *Nyssa sylvatica*, as the official County tree.

2. An estimate of changes in County revenues and expenditures regardless of whether the revenues or expenditures are assumed in the recommended or approved budget. Includes source of information, assumptions, and methodologies used.

Bill XX-21 is not expected to have an impact on County revenues or expenditures.

3. Revenue and expenditure estimates covering at least the next 6 fiscal years.

See response to Question #2.

4. An actuarial analysis through the entire amortization period for each bill that would affect retiree pension or group insurance costs.

Not applicable.

5. An estimate of expenditures related to County's information technology (IT) systems, including Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems.

Not applicable.

6. Later actions that may affect future revenue and expenditures if the bill authorizes future spending.

Not applicable. Bill XX-21 does not authorize future spending.

7. An estimate of the staff time needed to implement the bill.

No staff time is required to implement Bill XX-21.

8. An explanation of how the addition of new staff responsibilities would affect other duties.

Not applicable.

9. An estimate of costs when an additional appropriation is needed.

Not applicable.

10. A description of any variable that could affect revenue and cost estimates.

See response to Question #2.

11. Ranges of revenue or expenditures that are uncertain or difficult to project.

Not applicable.

12. If a bill is likely to have no fiscal impact, why that is the case.

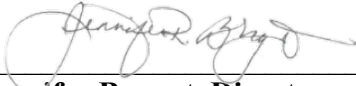
Bill XX-21 designates an official County tree, adding it to a list that includes the official County blossom and official County bird. There is no cost in making the designation nor will revenue be generated as a result.

13. Other fiscal impacts or comments.

Not applicable.

14. The following contributed to and concurred with this analysis:

Jason Mathias, Department of Environmental Protection
Richard H. Harris, Office of Management and Budget



**Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget**

9/21/21

Date

Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

BILL 48-21: GENERAL PROVISION — COUNTY SYMBOLS — COUNTY TREE — ESTABLISHED

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Bill 48-21 will have little to no impact on racial equity or social justice in the County.

PURPOSE OF RESJ IMPACT STATEMENTS

The purpose of racial equity and social justice (RESJ) impact statements is to evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice in the County. Racial equity and social justice refer to a **process** that focuses on centering the needs of communities of color and low-income communities with a **goal** of eliminating racial and social inequities.¹ Achieving racial equity and social justice usually requires seeing, thinking, and working differently to address the racial and social harms that have caused racial and social inequities.²

PURPOSE OF BILL 48-21

The purpose of Bill 48-21 is to designate the *Nyssa sylvatica*, commonly known as black tupelo as the County tree.³ The black tupelo (also known as blackgum, sourgum, Pepperidge, tupelo, and tupelo-gum) was selected by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Forest Conservation Advisory Committee after a year-long selection process that engaged multiple stakeholders including Montgomery Parks and Montgomery Planning.⁴ Criterion for selecting a County tree included identifying a local species that was available for purchase, had high ecological value, is large and is also a long-lived species. Bill 48-21 was introduced to the Council on December 14, 2021.

ANTICIPATED RESJ IMPACTS

OLO does not anticipate that Bill 48-21 will impact racial equity and social justice as designating the black tupelo as the County tree does not commit County or other resources to addressing racial and social inequities directly or indirectly. If Bill 48-21 included resources aimed at planting additional black tupelo trees in the County, resources aimed at identifying and addressing inequities in the County's tree canopy by race, ethnicity or income could help narrow racial and social inequities. In the absence of this additional commitment, OLO finds that Bill 48-21 will have little to no impact on RESJ in the County.

CAVEATS

Two caveats to this racial equity and social justice impact statement should be noted. First, predicting the impact of legislation on racial equity and social justice is a challenging, analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, this RESJ impact statement is intended to inform the legislative process rather than determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

December 20, 2021

RESJ Impact Statement

Bill 48-21

CONTRIBUTIONS

OLO staffer Dr. Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, Senior Legislative Analyst, drafted this RESJ impact statement.

¹ Definition of racial equity and social justice adopted from “Applying a Racial Equity Lens into Federal Nutrition Programs” by Marlysa Gamblin, et.al. Bread for the World, and from Racial Equity Tools <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

² Ibid

³ Montgomery County Council, Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols - County Tree - Established, introduced on December 14, 2021.

⁴ Ibid and Adam Ortiz memorandum to Marc Elrich on Official County Tree designation, September 29, 2021 included in packet of Livhu Ndou memorandum to County Council on Bill 48-21, December 9, 2021

Economic Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

Bill 48-21

General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree – Established

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that enacting Bill 48-21 would have no impact on economic conditions in the County.

BACKGROUND

If enacted, Bill 48-21 would officially designate the black tupelo as the County tree.¹

INFORMATION SOURCES, METHODOLOGIES, AND ASSUMPTIONS

Designating an official County tree would not affect private organizations or residents in terms of the Council's priority economic indicators.²

VARIABLES

Not applicable

IMPACTS

WORKFORCE ▪ TAXATION POLICY ▪ PROPERTY VALUES ▪ INCOMES ▪ OPERATING COSTS ▪ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ▪
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪ COMPETITIVENESS

Businesses, Non-Profits, Other Private Organizations

Not applicable

¹ Montgomery County Council, Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree – Established, Introduced on December 14, 2021.

² Montgomery County Code, Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements.

Economic Impact Statement

Office of Legislative Oversight

Residents

Not applicable

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Not applicable

WORKS CITED

Montgomery County Code. [Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements.](#)

Montgomery County Council. Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree – Established. Introduced on December 14, 2021.

CAVEATS

Two caveats to the economic analysis performed here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to *inform* the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the Bill under consideration

CONTRIBUTIONS

Stephen Roblin (OLO) prepared this report.



Conservation Montgomery

January 5, 2022

Testimony for the Montgomery County Council (Public Hearing is scheduled January 18, 2022)

RE: Bill 48-21, General Provision – County Symbols – County Tree – Established

Dear Councilmembers:

Conservation Montgomery supports designating the Black Tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) as our official County tree. This long-lived native species is a primary component of our Eastern forests and occurs naturally throughout the County. It is adaptable to a wide range of soil types, light conditions and moisture availability. The fall color and winter silhouette are outstanding.

Black Tupelo is an excellent choice for habitat restoration and for planting around homes and buildings. It also performs well as a street tree if given adequate root space and planted away from overhead wires.

While most county residents are familiar with maples, oaks and elms, they are probably less aware of the tupelos. Designating the Black Tupelo as our official County tree will give this tree species the recognition it deserves. *Below, we list a few locations of magnificent examples of this tree for those of you that wish to see it in full grandeur.

On behalf of the board, we are pleased to begin the New Year supporting a non-controversial Bill. We strongly urge you to do so too. Please designate the Black Tupelo as our official County tree.

Sincerely,

John Parrish
Conservation Montgomery Advocacy Committee

*Exceptionally large Black Tupelos occur at many County locations. Here are four locations to easily see this tree in full splendor.

- 1611 Cedar View Court – this is a vacant lot facing Georgia Avenue at 16th Street in the Montgomery Hills section of North Silver Spring. The trunk diameter measures 38 inches.
- 15825 Shady Grove Road – in front of a bio-tech building at Gaither Road in North Rockville. The trunk diameter is 45 inches.
- 3800 Damascus Road (MD 650) – in a pasture at the southwest corner of Howard Chapel Road & MD 650, in Unity. Trunk not measured.
- Opposite 306 Ridge Road – this is a common area of the Piedmont Crossing subdivision next to Washington Grove Conservation Park in Washington Grove. The trunk diameter is 48 inches.

Cc: County Executive Marc Elrich

Dear County Council Members Riemer, Friedson and Jawando,

Last Tuesday there was a public hearing on Bill 48-21 to establish a County Tree. There are a number of champion trees in Montgomery County, but none exceeds the size, height and longevity of the Goshen Elm.

The Goshen Elm is considered the largest English Elm in America. It is labeled with a plaque saying "Maryland Millennium Landmark Tree" and has a 290" circumference, 115' tall, and a 113' average crown spread.

The Goshen Elm is accessible to the public. Already established is the Goshen Elm Conservation Park, .27 acres surrounding this majestic tree.

<https://montgomeryparks.org/parks-and-trails/goshen-elm-conservation-park/>

Less than a half-mile away is the historic African-American community of Stewarttown and the Goshen United Methodist Church which has roots in the Stewarttown Church formed over a century ago. A history of the church on Goshen Road is attached.

As Former County Executive Ike Leggett wrote in the booklet, "Community Cornerstones: "A treasure is 'something considered exceptionally precious,' and the churches in this 'Community Cornerstones' guide are just that – precious structures that have provided strength, comfort and a spiritual foundation to generations of African Americans."

Let's select a County Tree that not only is a champion tree, but also reflects the racial heritage of our community.

Bob Nelson
22104 Goshen School Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20882-1404
301-254-7620

GOSHEN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

HISTORY Celebrating our past and boldly embracing our future

One of the most important institutions within the Black community was the church. Black churches were committed to religious training as well as the social, economic, and sometimes political concerns within the community. This commitment to the community was evident within the Brooke Grove and Stewartown communities.

Prior to the 1860s, the Black people were allowed to worship with White members of **Goshen Methodist Church** (currently the **Goshen Mennonite Church**) on Brink Road.

Blacks were required to sit in the upstairs gallery. The majority of the Blacks who attended were unhappy with this situation and decided to form a separate congregation.

The following men united to establish the first Board of Trustees; Wesley Randolph, Wesley Prather, James Hall, James Ross, Charles Brooks, Hezekiah Washington, Sr., William Washington, Reason Prather, Sr. and Basil R. Frazier. In 1870, two acres of land were purchased from Mr. Vachel Duffie, a local farmer, in the amount of \$150.00. One acre was designated for the church and the other acre was designated for a cemetery. In late 1871, the first sanctuary was erected. The original edifice was destroyed by fire several years later. Undaunted by its misfortune, faithful members held services in private homes until a new structure was ready. The second church was constructed on the original site in June of 1879.

“In this period of slavery and drudgery, they (Black people) were permitted to unite with the White people in the public worship of God at old Goshen Church. As the years rolled on, the

strong continued to oppress the weak, the master continued to crush the slave until Ethiopia stretched forth her hands to God and from every section of this country the pleadings and cries of broken hearted fathers, mothers and children went up as one man's prayer until God was moved upon His throne and spoke the word thus far shalt thou go and no further. Soon the war clouds of slavery disappeared and the sunshine of freedom suddenly dawned upon the face of the country. Truly it was a day of rejoicing for every heart of the Black race."

Rev. Howard Brooks, 55th Anniversary of Brooke Grove Church

Brooke Grove Methodist Episcopal Church was part of the "Rockville Circuit of Negro Churches", including Rockville, Emory Grove, Fairview, Mt. Zion, Howard Chapel, Quince Orchard, Brown's and Seneca. Preachers traveled by horseback ministering to different communities about the Glory of God.

"These men were truly the pioneer preachers of the times, endowed with natural instincts for leadership. They were men who believed in their calling and in their country and their God. They were the socializing agencies for the social, political and intellectual solidarity of isolated groups, and thus they became the sources of information on subjects of political, social and economic as well as scientific and educational values."

Rev. Howard Brooks

Although it was established in the 1800s, **Brooke Grove United Methodist Church's** third present edifice was dedicated in 1952 on the original property. Established in the 1900s, **Stewartown Methodist Church** was dedicated in 1944 and became the hub of the community. Many children enrolled in Sunday School, and family worship and community activities were held on a regular basis. The spirit-filled and nurturing atmosphere of the congregation helped many youth to aspire to new levels of achievement within the schools and the community.

In the early 1900's, the population in the Stewartown area increased making it difficult

for church members with large families to travel and attend church together. To meet the needs of an increasing population in the Stewartown area, a group of residents decided to begin worship in the private home of Charles Benjamin Stewart in 1907. With the steadily increasing numbers of worshippers attending services in the Stewart home, a group of men called the True Reformers perceived the need for a special building to accommodate these gatherings. Funds were collected and pooled at monthly meetings to help build the **Stewartown Literary, Social and Religious Society Hall** (known as the **Stewartown Hall**). The land purchased from William Hawkins became the site for the Stewartown Hall. This hall was used as a multipurpose facility for church, school and civic activities in the small Black community of Stewartown.

In 1914, the **Stewartown Methodist Episcopal Church** was founded by Charles B. Stewart, Basil R. Frazier, Charles H. Stewart, John Dorsey, John McAbee, Helen McAbee, Thomas Gant, John Butler, George and Harriet Plummer, Shadrach Riggs and Somerset Washington. Four men, Basil Frazier, Charles B. Stewart, Calvin McAbee and Richard Stewart formed the Board of Trustees of Stewartown Methodist Episcopal Church. Both churches were served by the same minister.

Brooke Grove and Stewartown Methodist Churches worked together to support individual and charge activities. Combined worship choirs, men and women organizations helped to strengthen and establish co-operative activities within both churches.

The two congregations looked to the future and developed a plan that would make a new church vital and relevant in a growing and diverse community. A four-year study was conducted to project the population growth, services and spiritual needs of the citizens of both communities.

Through this effort, a committee was formed with members from both congregations to create a strategy to initiate a viable church building program. The committee

recommended merging the two churches and forming a new congregation strong enough to realistically address the needs for future growth. The new church would be built on the land where Stewartown stood. The church merger was recommended to the administrative council of both churches and later presented to the entire congregation for discussion and a vote. In July 1990, a church conference of both churches voted to bring the two congregations together.

Another church conference was held in October 1990 to determine where the Sunday worship services were held until the new sanctuary was erected as well as to determine the name of the new congregation. By majority vote, the newly formed church would be called Goshen United Methodist Church. Worship services would be held at the Brooke Grove site until the new building in Stewartown was completed.

On January 1, 1991, **Goshen United Methodist Church** officially came into existence. Over the years, many gifts have been given in honor of and memory of loved ones. The new edifice was completed and opened on December 1, 2001. The steadfast love and dedicated service to our Lord shown by our ancestors continues to this day in our congregation. We thank God for the firm foundation on which our church was built.

Today's growing population in and around the community has impacted the church, where our membership has moved past the five hundred fifty mark. We give thanks and praise to Almighty God for blessing the past, present, and future. As we move ahead we proclaim the power of God's love in the lives of our men, women, and children. As members of Christ's Holy Church we are sure God's power, grace, and love will enable us to continually reflect the bright light of hope to all who seek refuge in the name of Jesus.

"To God Be The Glory, For The Great Things He Has Done"