



PUBLISHED SINCE 1948 FOR THE TOWN OF GLEN ECHO, MARYLAND ~ CHARTERED IN 1904 ~ MAY 2020

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## TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

In a Town first, the April 13 Council meeting was held as a video conference via Zoom. All of the Council Members were “present,” along with Mayor Polak, Town Clerk Beth Boa, and consultant-to-the-mayor Jean Sperling. A few residents also called in.

### Town Budget

After about ten minutes of adjusting to the technology, the meeting began. The Mayor prefaced the budget discussion with a note that resident input would be limited to two minutes per person. Council Member Spealman wanted the process clarified, so the Mayor explained that while the increase in the property-tax rate (from 15 to 16 cents) and the proposed budget would be introduced on this evening, resident feedback and Council Member changes could be considered in the next month. The May 11 Council meeting will include the budget hearing and a vote on the tax increase and

next year’s budget. From now until then is the time for residents to contact the Mayor and Council Members with any feedback, concerns, or questions.

Council Member Stiglitz introduced Resolution 20-03, increasing the property tax rate from \$.15 to \$.16 per \$100, as well as Ordinance 20-04 to adopt the Mayor’s 2020-2021 budget. The Council agreed, understanding that amendments can still be made. The budget discussion that followed was heavy on uncertainty as the economic effects of COVID-19 on the Town are unknowable at this point. Yes, Town Hall rental revenue will go down,

but will property values drop as well? Will we lose the Post Office as a renter? As it is, the increase in the property tax rate should mean about \$84 more per household and generate about \$8,200 for the Town—not an amount that could make up any great unanticipated shortfalls. The Council was in agreement that any line items in the budget that can be cut or deferred should be examined at this time.

When the discussion was opened up to residents, Vassar Circle developer and resident Aaron Hirsch talked about his experience with the new inspection and permitting processes in Town—both of which come with new costs for residents. He argued that having Town-hired engineers duplicating work by the County is ineffective as well as expensive. He cited his experience of receiving alerts from the Town lawyer as opposed to the Town

Clerk and of having meetings that included several paid employees or consultants as a waste of Town resources. As Mr. Hirsch began to comment that the Town does not need a full-time Town Clerk, the Mayor muted him and moved on. Resident Renny Springuel seconded that this is a time for saving and planning for the future.

Mr. Spealman asked for clarification on a budget item for a Town survey for \$150k. Ms. Sperling explained that this is something other Towns do: hire a consultant for between \$50k and \$80k to assess the Town’s infrastructure needs. The remaining \$70k–\$100k would be for making the suggested infrastructure improvements.

In response to the monthly financials, Council Member Costello asked that the totals for consultants like Joe Toomey, Wayne Fowler, and lawyer Ron Bolt be itemized,

# THE ECHO

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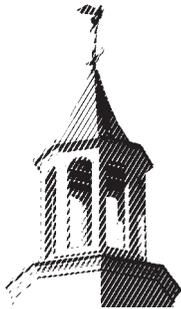
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Letters to the editor are welcome. They must be signed. Articles for publication are also solicited. Please send comments about *The Echo* to the editor, the Mayor, or any Council Member. Volunteer reporters are always needed.



## TOWN OF GLEN ECHO

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### CLERK-TREASURER

Beth Boa ([townhall@glenecho.org](mailto:townhall@glenecho.org))

Next (Virtual) Council Meeting: May 11, 2020, 7 PM

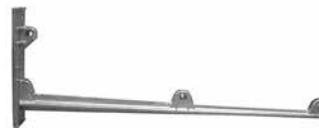
so that the Council can see what issues are costing the Town the most. Other Members agreed that would help if cuts to the budget need to be made in the upcoming months. Ms. Costello questioned monthly payments like the maid and handyman services for Town Hall and said that we should be eliminating any unnecessary-at-this-time costs.

### Odds and Ends

Town Hall is closed at this time, and Ms. Boa is working from home. She provided pictures of two bracket options for the Town's new street signs, but the discussion of them at this meeting was short. Mr. Spealman asked if other vendors have been approached, and Ms.



Custom street sign bracket



Standard bracket

Boa said that she hasn't contacted others yet. No follow up was decided. As part of the recent push for emergency preparedness, Ms. Boa suggested the Town apply for a grant to help to pay for an automated external defibrillator for Town Hall. As having one is not a requirement, Mr. Stiglitz said it could wait until a

time when the Council isn't looking to be conservative in its spending.

Ms. Boa reported that the transition to the new trash and recycling vendor was smooth—only five residents had trouble with the new sorting and just one house was missed in the first pick-up. There was a discussion about the Town's streetlamps sparked by a new, very bright LED light at University and Harvard. Some lights are owned by the Town, some by the County, and some by Pepco, so a cohesive plan is hard to come by. In this case, the light was in fact too bright and was replaced after a complaint. The future is LED, so these discussions will be ongoing.

The Council returned to the topic of stormwater issues in town due to sidewalks that are too low. Ms. Boa has been unable to get a third bid, so she will try again to solicit one. If she is unsuccessful, the Council will proceed with raising the sidewalks at the bottom of Wellesley Circle (by Cornell), where the damage to private property is most extreme. The low bid for that work at the time of this meeting was \$16,200.

### Town Expenses

In April, the Town paid \$6,934 to Hughes Landscaping, \$3,200 to Key Sanitation, \$2,146 to Bolt Legal, and \$1,148 to Joseph Toomey Associates. —EMILY PARSONS

**M**ayor Willem Polak has released his proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget, which spans July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

FY-2020 is proposed to close its books with a Net Revenue of \$61,254—a decline of nearly \$11,000 from FY-2019 actuals but a significant positive increase (\$49,900) over its budgeted net income. On the revenue side of the ledger, the Town came remarkably close to hitting its FY-2020 budget. The Town budgeted for \$364,531 in gross revenue and is projected to collect \$364,904.

The major story line for the FY-2020 performance is on the expense side of the ledger. Town expenses are expected to increase \$21,266 over FY-2019 actuals but are more than \$50,000 less than the Council budgeted for in FY-2020. Given the mild winter, it is little surprise that Snow Removal Costs were significantly lower (\$20,000 less than the budgeted amount).

There were a few notable exceptions to the trend of

## MONEY MATTERS

lower expense. Town Pay Roll (i.e., salary, employer taxes, and training expenses for the Town Clerk) have increased

\$20,230 from FY-2019 actuals and are \$4,500 higher than what was budgeted for FY-2020. Likewise, the Town Engineer/Building Inspection line item has also increased significantly. The Town projects that it will incur \$20,000 by the end of this Fiscal year in this category—up more than \$13,000 from FY-2019 and \$10,000 more than was budgeted.

The Mayor's FY-2021 Proposed Budget projects total revenue of \$368,216, a modest increase of \$3,685 over FY-2020 year-end projections. The Mayor's budget overview and explanation (which accompanies the budget document) notes that local property taxes and receipts from the State Income Tax make up slightly more than 2/3 of the Town's



annual revenue. Real estate is currently taxed by the Town at a rate \$0.15 per \$100 of assessment. The Mayor projects that property tax collections overall will decline in FY-2021, and, as a result, he proposes to increase the rate to \$0.16 per \$100 of assessment. The proposed budget projects that revenue from Personal Property Taxes, Highway Revenue, Rental Income, Interest, License/Permits, and Cable Franchise Fees will increase modestly, while revenue from State Income Tax will decline moderately.

On the expense side of the ledger, the Mayor's budget proposes total expenditures of \$350,105, projecting net revenue of \$18,111 over the course of FY-2021. As noted about FY-2020, spending is going up to include "the annualized costs for a salaried, full-time Town Manager." Employer taxes are expected to remain flat at \$4,500, bringing Payroll and related expenses up to \$67,500. To put this in context, this is up from \$37,570 in FY-2019 and \$57,800 in FY-2020—a 55 percent increase over two years.

The budget also proposes \$66,000 in Professional Services Expenses, up \$6,423 from the FY-2020 projections. Most line items remain flat; however, there is an additional \$5,000 for

specialized legal services connected with the "possible" sale of two properties owned by the Town. Auditing expenses have declined over time as a result of negotiating a multiyear contract with the Town's auditing firm. After the Town Attorney, the Town Engineer/Building Inspector budget line item represents the second largest line item in the Professional Services section at \$20,000. This is up from \$6,670 in FY-2019, prior to the Town hiring additional consultants.

Fixed operating expenses which include utilities, office expenses, administration expenses, printing of *The Echo*, and other small expenses are anticipated to remain mostly flat, hewing to FY-2020 actuals. Similarly, expenses related to Streets and Town Services are also expected to remain flat with a few exceptions—the proposed budget would decrease the Town's Community Contribution from \$4,000 to \$2,000 (it will only support GEPPAC) and Environmental Improvement from \$5,000 to \$1,000. Street Sweeping and Street Signs are also expected to decrease modestly. The budget proposes a significant increase in snow removal expenses over FY-2020 actuals, anticipating a normal winter with typical snow removal expenses. — **THOM AMDUR**  
.....  
*The budget hearing will be held via Zoom on May 11 at 7 PM as part of the Council meeting.*

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## HOLLY IN THE IVY

Now, more than ever, I am appreciating my garden. Being outside working with plants and harvesting fresh vegetables, herbs, and flowers has many benefits. Personally, while gardening I not only feel a sense of satisfaction, I also feel connected to the natural world.

In recent years, learning to garden has become standard at schools, nursing homes, prisons, and retirement communities. Research has demonstrated that gardening reduces stress, calms the mind, and provides a sense of well-being. It provides a positive way to channel negative feelings and transform them into more positive emotions. Nurturing plants and being part of creating something beautiful can be soothing and a boost to one's self-esteem.

Taking care of a garden is good exercise. It burns calories and thus raises our levels of serotonin and

dopamine, which makes us feel better. A study done in Holland demonstrated that gardening for 30 minutes lowered cortisol levels. Cortisol is the hormone associated with stress. Research at the University of Pennsylvania suggests that 30 minutes of gardening can help you sleep better at night. Other studies tell us that gardening helps to reduce the risk of strokes and heart attacks and reduces the risk of dementia. Moreover, the Vitamin D from the sun helps our bodies to absorb calcium, which is needed for strong bones and lowers the risk for contracting other diseases.

Involving children in gardening often has life-long benefits. By interacting with plants, children develop a stronger bond with the natural world. It has been shown that children become better learners when they have plants around them. A program at a juvenile rehabilitation center showed that

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gardening helped the youths see themselves in a more positive light. Working with plants helped them better manage their emotional and behavioral problems. A personal friend who grew up in New York City first became intrigued by plants when he sprouted bean seeds in the classroom and this spurred



him toward a rewarding career in horticulture.

Also, taking care of plants gives human beings of any age a sense of responsibility and connects them with other living things. Gardening can help us live in the present moment rather than focusing on problems from the past or possibly potential problems in the future.

If you are not currently a gardener but think you

might want to give it a try, here are a few tips:

- Start small so you get a sense for what is involved in having a thriving garden.

- Seeds are a great way to grow edibles and short-lived plants like lettuce, dill, and arugula.

- Add fragrant plants to the garden—inhaling their scents is wonderful for humans and will lure beneficial insects to your garden.

- If you create an outdoor garden design, be sure it can

be enjoyed from inside the house as well as enjoyed while relaxing outside.

- Include a bench outside in order to experience the pleasure of sitting in your garden.

- Plants die, but it is not always your fault. Try again, and don't get discouraged.

Be sure to come to the plant swap and find some garden treasures (details at right). —**HOLLY SHIMIZU**

## TOWN PLANT SWAP

Since the **Glen Echo Plant Exchange**



does not require person-to-person contact and because so many people are finding gardening to be a calming activity in these difficult times, we are going ahead with plans to hold it. However, we have moved the date to **SATURDAY, MAY 9** to give everyone an extra week toward “flattening the curve.” Please conform to the state restrictions of maintaining a 6-foot distance from each other, no more than 10 people together at one time, and wear a mask/bandana and gloves. (Gardening gloves are perfect for this occasion). Also, wipe down your pots and tools.

The plant exchange will take place from **9:30 AM until 4 PM** at the site of the mini farm stand tables on University between Harvard and Yale Avenues. Many neighbors were pleased with last year's exchanges, filling yards with Mexican sunflowers, zinnias, euphorbia, and elephant ears. Seeds can also be exchanged. You can bring as many plants/seeds as you like and take whatever you wish: This is an uncurated free exchange. If possible, mark your plants with their names and sun/partial-sun/shade preferences. Online apps such as PlantSnap and FlowerChecker can help with identification. If you don't have any plants to exchange, you're still welcome to come after 1 PM and take whatever is still available. This is a great way to add interest to our Glen Echo yards and gardens! —**CAROL BARTON**

PHOTO: BENJAMIN COMBES / UNSPLASH



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## SHELTER IN PLACE

Let's face it, the COVID crisis has gotten most of us a little too well acquainted with our kitchens. Making good use of all our equipment, pulling out heirloom recipes, and cramming ingredients in every pantry corner. However, for those of us who are encountering too little time or lack of interest to luxuriate in cooking each and every meal, these takeout or delivery stalwarts will hopefully provide you some reprieve.

For an easy pick-up, drive to **Bistro Aracosia**



in Palisades for authentic Afghan cuisine. Whether you're vegetarian or a hardcore carnivore, Aracosia will certainly become a new favorite if it hasn't already. The family-owned business is an absolute gem.

To continue your travels

around the world, send your Caviar courier to pick-up from **Anju**, the upscale fusion Korean restaurant in Adams Mor-

gan recently ranked #1 by *The Washingtonian*.

If you're like us, all your days are now blurring together, but that makes any day good for pizza. **Glen Echo Pizza** continues to be the reliable and steady place it's always been and

just a short stroll away. Try their new additions like its offering of hoagies and burgers now with Impossible patties. I dare you to know the difference.

And for those who just can't kick a craving from one of the bigger brand pizza joints, most are offering steep discounts and free delivery these days. But word to the wise, whether you're doing pickup or delivery, make sure to tip generously. The new normal is a minimum of 20%. —**MONA KISHORE**

## ICE CREAM IS ESSENTIAL!

If you haven't yet tried Sarah's Handmade Ice Cream, you're missing out on a delicious treat during these stressful times. Sarah Park and her daughter Annie opened the store last year, located just around the corner from Whole Foods Market on River Road. They're open now for takeout and call-ahead curbside pickup, with over forty ice cream flavors plus cakes, cookies, and doggie "pup-cups" on the menu. All the ice cream is made on the premises from fresh, locally sourced ingredients, with new flavors being added all the time.

After Sarah sold her Fresh Deli business in New Carrollton, Maryland, she wanted to try something new.

She'd been making small batches of ice cream at home for friends and neighbors, who encouraged her to start selling it commercially. Thus, the idea for an ice cream store was born. She took over the former Wow Cow location, bought a new commercial ice cream maker, and she and her daughter/partner Annie redecorated and branded with an original logo and website. She normally has an enthusiastic staff of local high school and college students, who will be back once the corona virus restrictions are lifted. And she's opening a second location at Wildwood Shopping Center on



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Sarah and Annie specialize in coming up with new flavors, some by trial and error, some by doing research, and some at the suggestion

of customers. (Henry Barrow convinced her to start making his favorite: ginger ice cream). Recently they donated 50 scoops to Suburban and Sibley hospital workers, and when the hospitals called for more, they set up a matching campaign on their website where for every scoop purchased they donate a second scoop to a hospital worker.

You can order for curbside pickup on their website, sarahshandmadeicecream.com or stop by the store for takeout. The hardest part is figuring out which flavor to try. —**CAROL BARTON**



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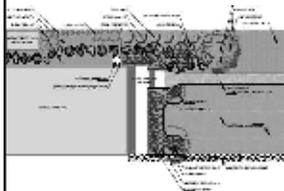
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As we enter week number—oh, who wants to count?—of social distancing, you might find yourself yearning for a drink. The liquor stores are open, but we're here to help with what I'm calling "pantry cocktails"—these focus on things you might have around the house, and offer plenty of flexibility, keeping your eyes on the prize.

I'll start with an actual recipe I got from a friend, appropriately enough, on a Zoom happy hour. To make a Bees Knees, you'll need two ounces of gin, one ounce of lemon juice, and one ounce of honey syrup. (To make honey syrup, dissolve honey in an equal part

of boiling water.) Shake it all up with ice in a cocktail shaker until frost forms on the outside, then strain into your fanciest glass.

What if you don't have gin? Use vodka or bourbon. No lemons? Use lime juice or grapefruit juice. No honey? Make simple syrup with sugar or brown sugar or maple syrup. The basic formula is 2 ounce of the base liquor, 3/4 ounce of something sour, and 3/4 ounce of something sweet. Most of the variations have names, but don't worry about what your creation is called—we're in a global pandemic here.

## PANTRY DRINKING



Here are some other ideas for quenching your thirst during these strange days:

- Do as the Spanish do and make *tinto de verana*. Mix some very cold, preferably very cheap, red wine with lemon-lime soda. The most common choice in Spain is Casera, which is most like Diet Sprite (weird, right?). It makes good use of a bottle you might not love, and you can add as much soda as you like.

- Get to know your liquor cabinet. If you're like me, you have bottles you bought years ago and used for that one cocktail. What the heck is Benedictine? How about

ginger liqueur? Creme de cacao? Take a tiny sip and if you like it, try adding 3/4 ounce to the cocktail formula above. Most liqueurs are a bit sweet, so you'll probably want less simple syrup.

- If you take that tiny sip and totally hate it, just dump it. Most liquor doesn't go bad, but we're also all in spring-cleaning mode. Out with the old!

- Maybe you've got a bottle that's just in the way—a great big handle with just a little left, that annoyingly tall pointy bottle of Galiano that basically needs its own custom cabinet. Focus your cocktail efforts on sending those bottles out to your new blue recycling bin.

- Make something light and bubbly. Top your cocktail with club soda, seltzer, whatever you got.

- Don't forget the garnish: some mint from the garden, a twist of lemon or lime peel, a cherry.

Enjoy your drink on your porch as you wave to neighbors or connect with a friend online. —ANGELA HIRSCH



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## HAVE YOU HEARD?

The April primary has been moved to **June 2** and will be conducted by absentee ballot. Ballots will be delivered by mail to all registered voters by mid-May. If registered, you don't have to apply, it will be sent to your registered address automatically.

**ELECTION  
UPDATE**



### Two Important Points:

**1. Be sure to sign the verification oath** on the ballot for it to be counted (this has been the most common problem for absentee ballots to not be counted).

**2. Ballots must be postmarked no later than June 2.**

You must be registered with the Republican or Democratic party to vote for partisan offices such as the party nominees for President. Unaffiliated voters will only vote for Board of Education. The deadline to register to vote, or to change your residential address or party affiliation, is Wednesday, May 27, 2020. Voters who have moved, who are temporarily away from home, or who have not received a ballot by Friday, May 15, 2020, should visit the voter look-up tool of the Maryland State Board of Elections or text CHECK to 77788 to verify their information and request a ballot. If you want your ballot mailed to another address or to download it from the Election Board website, visit the Election Board Absentee Voting page <https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/absentee.html>.

All mailed ballots will include a return envelope with prepaid postage. Alternatively, you can drop your ballot off by 8 PM on June 2 at one of four locations in Montgomery County (Silver Spring Civic Building is closest) or you can vote in person at those locations. A draft of the ballot can be found at [https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/primary\\_ballots/Montgomery.pdf](https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2020/primary_ballots/Montgomery.pdf). —**BONNIE WHYTE**

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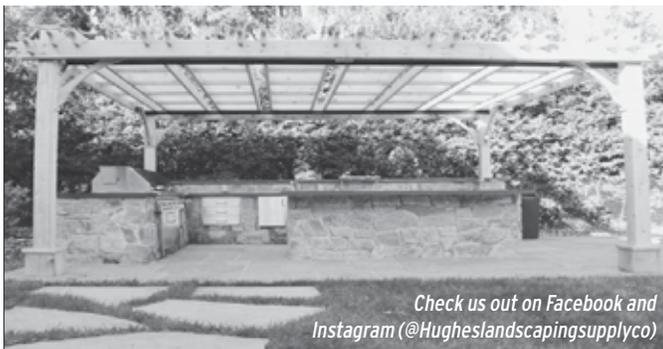
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**B**ravo to the 73% of Glen Echo households that have responded to the **2020 Census**. The Census helps determine how resources are allocated in Maryland, so to the other 27%, do it today!

.....

**I**n observance of social isolation, the next **virtual Ladies Night** is set for Wednesday, May 20, at 8 PM. Details will be sent out closer to the date.

### Real Estate Report

While the Wild Bird Center is the only active listing at press time, at \$3,250,000, we hear that 22 Wellesley Circle and 4 Vassar Circle are coming very soon.



### They Say it's Your BIRTHDAY!

- May 8, **Eliza White**, 11
- May 9, **Sophie Polak**, 9
- May 12, **Aran Bragan**, 8
- May 23, **Alice Amdur**, 5

**A**s many of you know, our Dentzel Carousel roof renovation was recently completed, and it looks wonderful. Unfortunately, a break-in occurred on the evening of April 11, and interior elements (not the horses) of the Carousel were damaged. As this vandalism was a federal crime, the National Park Service is conducting an investigation. The Park has had to take additional steps to prohibit access to all buildings including the Bumper Car Pavilion and Cuddle Up. The playground is also off limits. The Park will be closed from 8 PM to 6 AM to assure additional security, and police will be monitoring for unauthorized access. Feel free to continue daytime walks in the Park, which looks lovely at this time of year!

In regard to the damage to the Carousel, the Partnership and Montgomery County will work with the National Park Service to assess the damage and complete renovations. We

## OUR TOWN PARK

are hopeful to be able to reopen the Carousel when damages are repaired and the County has given us a green light to reopen to the public. 2021 is the 100th anniversary of the Carousel, and we still plan to have many celebratory events.



Despite being physically closed, our cooperating arts and culture programs continue to provide online programs and classes. The Aquarium has weekly Facebook Live events including their popular storytelling. The Yellow Barn, Photoworks, Washington Conservatory, and Adventure Theater are holding online classes. Or you can download videos (learn to Tango!)

and various art projects for kids. Check the #StayConnected page on the website for weekly offerings.

We are pleased to have partnered with True Respite Brewery to secure emergency relief funding. True Respite offered a four pack of its Glen Echo Park brew Malted Milkshake Ale and commemorative mug for every-

one who signed up as a \$50 member of the Park. This was a new effort for the Partnership, and we hope to offer this type of promotion in the future. I hear the beer is great! We continue

to seek donations through matching grant programs and, of course, are applying for all federal, state, and local relief funds. The board and staff are working on plans for a gradual reopening of the Park for classes, camps, and other events. This is a complicated task! Stay tuned for more information, which will be posted on the Park website. —**MARTHA SHANNON**

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# Coming Soon!

**4 VASSAR CIRCLE, the first of four custom homes in Glen Echo, is nearing completion.**

Look for a new listing and open house dates. Every design detail has been painstakingly considered, from the house number and door bell to room layouts and more. Excellent workmanship is backed by a warranty.

**4 Vassar** offers luxury living in a flexible, manageable space.

And Glen Echo has it all: a fantastic community of neighbors you want to know, convenient access to Bethesda, DC and Virginia, and top public schools.

- Luminous living spaces throughout
- Thermidor appliances in a welcoming open kitchen
- One-car garage and off-street parking with Pinterest-worthy mudroom entrance
- Spacious master suite with marble double shower, double walk-in closets, and treetop views
- Two additional upper bedrooms and second floor laundry room
- Light-filled lower level rec room, bedroom and bath
- Bonus room for storage, home office, or gym



**LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SALES:** Kingman Development. Aaron Hirsch, Principal. An award-winning developer and Glen Echo resident with 20 years of experience in residential property development, design, and construction management.

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Welty Homes, Inc., builders of more than 300 new homes in the greater Bethesda area since 1983.

**ARCHITECTURE:** Claude C. Lapp Architects, an award-winning firm with more than 35 years in the business.

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