

Mimi Brodsky-Kress and Chuck Sullivan of Renewing Montgomery (RM) met with members of the East Bethesda Citizens Association on May 16, 2007. Chuck discussed RM and explained that many of the people involved in the initiative are concerned independent builders who want to ensure better communications among everyone involved in, or affected by, neighborhood building. He suggested everyone visit www.renewingmontgomery.com and share any questions and concerns by email RM through the website.

Some of the topics discussed at the meeting:

- Participants in RM include many local builders, several of whom are listed on the RM website under “Who We Are – About This Initiative”
- A homeowner had two flat tires as a result of construction from building next door to his home, and received no help from the builder. RM suggested that if the builder was uncooperative, the homeowner should complain to the Better Business Bureau.
- In general, patching roads following construction activity is the responsibility of the utility companies, not the builder. To request repair of a pothole, residents should make an online request of the Department of Permitting Services by visiting dps@montgomerycountymd.gov.
- General street wear and tear is addressed through scheduled patching and paving by the County.
- If limits are placed on construction in East Bethesda, the property rights of many homeowners could be adversely affected. The value of homes and lots is directly related to the size of the remodeled or new home built on the site.
- The suggestion was made that the RM website should have links to other organizations that address "economic takings" and their effect on property values. Chuck asked the gentleman making the suggestion to forward link info to RM through the RM website.
- An enquiry was made as to who enforces zoning rules, and how neighbors can confirm proper permits are in place for sheds, patios, etc. RM advised to contact the Department of Permitting Services, 255 Rockville Pike 2nd Floor, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 240-777-6300, dps@montgomerycountymd.gov. The website will show if the homeowner has applied for a permit.

- The size of remodeled and new homes reflects the maximization of the value of a particular property and clients' preferences. Smaller homes are built when the property owner wants a smaller home.
- Placing restrictions on a homeowner's right to sell to a speculative builder would unfairly limit the value of the homeowner's property.
- The suggestion was made that RM develop a code of conduct for builders. RM advised that the Successful Practices for Homebuilders in the RM Renewing Established Neighborhoods Guide are designed to encourage good conduct by all builders.
- A question was asked if the building code could address size and setbacks relative to existing adjacent homes rather than being based on lot size. RM advised the creation of codes is a legislative issue.
- Attendees were asked if they think new homes should be required to have off-street parking. About half in the room were in favor; half thought driveways take up too much green space.
- The question was asked if off-street parking might be based on lot size, so that smaller lots exempt. Again, RM advised the creation of codes is a legislative issue.
- The question was asked if legislation might address taste and aesthetic compatibility. RM believes taste and aesthetics are property rights, and as such belong to the property owner.
- The issue of builders cutting down trees on lot was discussed. RM advised that most builders want to save trees, as they makes a lot more desirable; in certain cases, trees are not healthy or are in the way of construction. Most builders support planting new trees whenever possible.
- Approximately half the group was in favor of having the right to do as they choose with trees on their lots.