

**FitzMall.com features:**

- CarFind**  
Search new and used
- AutoMalls**  
Find products and services

**Fitzgerald AUTO MALLS**  
FitzMall.com SINCE 1966

**FitzWay**

All vehicles have discounted, delivered, no haggle prices. Shop now!

Enter The Gazette's  
**my favorite teacher**  
CONTEST



# Gazette.Net

Maryland Community Newspapers Online

Now 77° Wed 74°/57° Thu 76°/65° 5-day forecast Traffic

  [Advanced Search](#)

- Montgomery | Prince George's | Frederick | Sports | Politics | Business | Entertainment | Speak Out | Jobs | Autos | Homes | Classifieds

Wednesday, Aug. 20, 2008

## Council weighs policies as county goes urban

Parking becomes a frontline battle

by Janel Davis | Staff Writer

[E-mail this article](#) | [Print this article](#)

### More News

- [Commission for water, sewer loses two members](#)
- [Community show, new police facility open in Thurmont](#)
- [Maryland Senior Olympics start with bang](#)
- [Mount Airy mom places ninth in triathlon](#)
- [Candidate withdraws from school board race](#)

Robert Seeley has been driving a dump truck for about nine years. The retired Gaithersburg resident makes periodic trips hauling sand and stone for a Frederick company. When not in use, Seeley's truck is parked at his home 300 feet from the street in a wooded area.

But other truckers in the county do not have the same buffer and must park their commercial vehicles on neighborhood streets. The County Council is examining a proposal that could force them to park the vehicles elsewhere.

"I see where trucks are being parked along streets, which is unsafe. Trucks are big and sitting along the side of a street, people have to constantly squirm around them. It's not the safest thing in the world," Seeley said. "But yet these guys are trying to make a living, they don't have anywhere else to park them. I can sympathize with them."

Seeley weighs safety with compassion for his fellow truckers, typifying the dilemma that governments face as jurisdictions like Montgomery County evolve from suburban bedroom communities to urban centers.

"As the county becomes more urbanized we have to examine what should be our policies. We also have to look at transitioning policies from suburban to urban, and not just by flipping a switch, but as part of a transition," Council President Michael J. Knapp told a group of reporters recently.

Along the way, policy makers are working to balance needs of changing demographics, while maintaining roots with the county's past.

In the case the commercial vehicle legislation, proposed by Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown, the debate has centered between residents who wanting safer streets and vehicle operators who have nowhere else to park.



Find out where to be and what to see.

Search right this second  
Gazette.Net



Photos by Chris Rossi/ The Gazette  
Apartments and condos fill the floors above restaurants at the Rockville Town Center, a side-by-side mix of suburban and urban.

**THIS WEEKEND**

Find out where to be and what to see.

Search Gazette.Net's  
**NEW ONLINE COMMUNITY CALENDAR**  
right this second. [GO](#)

**FEATURED JOBS**

**RMA Worldwide Chauffeured**  
Trans. is a leading provider of high end customer service in the More

**Music Director Choir**  
Director Organist Looking to fill these positions! St. Timothy's Epi More

**GC253 Health Services**  
Group Virtual Job Fair General Dynamics Information Technology's Health More

**COMMERCIAL SERVICE ELECTRICIAN**  
Understands and responds to customer needs. Team player cooperates More

[See All Featured Ads](#)

### TOP JOBS

**GOT JOB? The**  
Gazette & Star's ONLINE Job Fair September 15th - 26th Attention Employers! Finally.....the [More](#)

**DECORATOR SALES CONSULTANT**  
FT, If you area a successful

[Place a classifieds ad now](#)

### WEEKLY SPECIALS

**Home Healthcare Exceptional Services At**  
an Affordable Rate. Avail 24/7.... [More](#)

**SILVER SPRING: Sat Sept 13th**  
8am-2 p 211 Piping Rock Drive. Baby... [More](#)

**A Loving Day Care Safe,**  
Educational & Fun Environment See, 20 Yrs. Exp.... [More](#)  
[See All Featured Ads](#)

### RESOURCES

- [About us](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Contact us](#)
- [Gazette jobs](#)
- [Nonprofits](#)
- [Montgomery](#)
- [Frederick](#)
- [Prince George's](#)

County Executive Isiah Leggett's office is also working on a set of code enforcement regulations, which could cover more than just where commercial vehicles park but whether residents can park their cars in their lawns.

Councilwoman Nancy Floreen has floated implementing a parking tax to pay for infrastructure. Various other policies

are aimed at getting commuters out of their cars and into public transportation, living closer to where the work and promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles.

"Counties have the primary responsibility for land use and that means trying to balance delivery of services and effective use of space across every community," said Michael J. Sanderson, legislative director for the Maryland Association of Counties. "And when that means that people have changing views on their lifestyle — where they live, work and what amenities are nearby — counties need to be the first to react to their consumers."

Montgomery began its growth spurt and urbanization faster than other area jurisdictions thanks to trolley cars — used in the early 1900s — to connect the county to Washington, said Stephen S. Fuller, a regional economist at George Mason University.

"The county needs to think about its finances and growth differently than when it was a bedroom community. Developments like Rockville and Germantown are expanding and more people commute into the county to work than commute out."

Balancing the needs of a changing county has become a key component in the decisions made by county leaders.

"That's always been one of our tensions. We can't apply suburban rules to everything. We do need to get our act together," said Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park.

Finding that balance is "exactly the challenge that county officials face: the decision of who pays for public services — through things like user fees or impact fees, as opposed to general levies like taxes — is one of the fundamentals of tax policies," Sanderson said.

In addition to balancing the costs of a changing jurisdiction, county leaders are also faced with balancing the desires of some residents reluctant to change.

"Sometimes people want to keep things the same, but change is inevitable," Fuller said. "There will be a continuing turnover and you can't stop it."

Urbanizing counties like Montgomery and Arlington, Va., have to keep up with the changing demographics, such as allowing for higher densities in certain areas including near Metro stations. On the other hand, Fuller continued, counties have also instituted strict zoning rules to prevent an "urban creep" into suburban neighborhoods.

"So you get a side-by-side mix of suburban and urban like around Rockville," he said. "That's the way county officials have sold it: We'll maintain a quality of suburbia, but there is also a need to increase the tax base, through density, in these urban centers."

The changes that Montgomery and other counties are experiencing is not new, but an ongoing evolution experienced by "inner-ring" jurisdictions, in between inner cities, like Washington and outer suburbs, said David Freund, an associate professor of history at the University of Maryland, College Park.

"There is nothing that is truly suburban or urban and cities have been changing like this for years," Freund said. "Some of the changes and proposals are changes of necessity. We like to categorize the world as urban, suburban or rural, but since the 1960s and 1970s, that has change dramatically because of the changing nature of metropolitan growth."

County leaders are poised to tackle the issues in the fall.

"With the commercial vehicle legislation, people need a place to put their commercial vehicles. It's a tricky balance. I think this council is likely to look at ways to shift the balance. There is a lot to be worked through," said Floreen.

A council worksession on the commercial vehicle legislation is scheduled for Sept. 11.



Savor the best of the  
Greenbrier Valley  
...on us!

Enter to win  
an exciting  
getaway for two!

**GREENBRIER VALLEY**  
WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia  
Wild and Wonderful

Enter Today!  
www.greenbrierwv.com

Greenbrier County  
Convention & Visitors Bureau