

# With Little Funding Support, Community Centers Get a Push From Residents

By Lori Aratani  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Thursday, February 21, 2008; GZ07

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/20/AR2008022001507\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/20/AR2008022001507_pf.html)

The residents had been promised that the community centers in their neighborhoods would be in line for renovation funds, but when [Montgomery County](#) officials unveiled their proposed building plans, the money just wasn't there.

There was some money in the Capital Improvement Plan for fixing up one center, Plum Gar in [Germantown](#), but four others -- Good Hope, Ross Boddy, [Scotland](#) and Clara Barton -- would get only small allocations for renovations.

So with the help of the community group Action In [Montgomery](#), residents of five historically black neighborhoods and other supporters did what you do when you want action: They pushed and prodded, they phoned and persuaded. They persuaded four County Council members -- [Roger Berliner](#) (D-Potomac-[Bethesda](#)), Valerie Ervin (D-[Silver Spring](#)), [George L. Leventhal](#) (D-At Large) and [Duchy Trachtenberg](#) (D-At Large) -- to sign a letter urging their colleagues to provide funding for the four centers that were left out.

On Tuesday, the residents packed the council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee meeting and won preliminary support from committee members to push renovations forward at the four centers.

Of course, the key will be finding money to pay for the work. Recreation chief Gabriel Albornoz said part of the reason the projects weren't all funded was that this is a tight budget year. But he and other county officials are headed back to the drawing board to see what they can do.

For Brandi Swales, 18, a senior at Churchill High School, it was a sweet victory. She might not be able to enjoy the expanded community center that might be built in her [Scotland](#) neighborhood, but she's hoping her younger sister, age 13, and her friends will benefit.

"It's the place we go, right after school every day," she said.