

**NOMINATION FOR:  
THE FOURTH ANNUAL HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM  
SOLVING**

**TITLE OF PROBLEM-SOLVING EFFORT:  
POOLESVILLE PROJECT #G95 -15**

**NOMINATED BY:  
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**AUGUST 1, 1996**

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## INTRODUCTION

The town of Poolesville was incorporated by the state of Maryland in 1867. This historic community is situated in the northwest corner of Montgomery County, thirty three miles from Washington D.C. and in close proximity to the Potomac River. The town takes great pride in its long history, rural charm and self sufficiency. From a small rural community of 349 residents and approximately eight family owned businesses in the early 1970's, the town of Poolesville grew over ten fold, to 3,775 residents by 1989. With this growth in population came a need for economic development, including the building of several strip malls. To accommodate the communities need for security, the Montgomery County Police were assigned to provide the town services with patrols encompassing over one hundred square miles of residential properties and farms. Poolesville is one of the ten sectors covered by the Montgomery County Police from the Germantown station.

## SCANNING

By the early 1990's, the commercial district of the town of Poolesville, located on Fisher Avenue, had grown from eight family run businesses to approximately 30 commercial enterprises. These include such well know fast food franchisees as McDonalds, Little Ceasars Pizza and CVS Pharmacy as well as many private enterprises. Local businesses rely on the Montgomery Police to ensure their safety.

The Poolesville community, previously known for its peaceful, safe and quiet living, began to experience an increase in crime in the 1990's, commiserate with growth in the towns population. By 1994, the Poolesville business district had become an area commonly used by teenagers as a meeting place. This resulted in numerous police for disorderly conduct, loitering, alcohol violations, vandalism, fights, commercial burglaries and drug usage. The majority of these calls were after business hours. From September 1994 to September 1995, an all time high of 167 calls for police service, excluding calls for alarms and motor vehicle accidents, were registered. This prompted Ofc Pavlick, a twelve year resident of Poolesville, to initiate a Problem - Oriented Policing Project to address the situation. Increased crime rate. Ofc Pavlick requested assignment to the Poolesville beat, one of the ten areas covered by the Montgomery County Police Department from the Germantown District Station in August of 1995. The Poolesville beat covers 106 square miles, however, the majority of calls for police services are generated from within the one square mile of the business district.

## ANALYSIS

To address the frustrations of the local merchants and assess the true extent of the problem, Ofc Pavlick first met with town managers and several residents of the community to discuss their concerns. These interviews revealed a general fear expressed by all those interviewed that the existing problems would be detrimental to business, had the potential to escalate to more serious crime and spread to the residential and more rural portions of the community. Review of the pre\dousjiisloiy-of-calls-fbr\_service to the Germantown Station from the Poolesville District, demonstrated that the majority of calls were logged between 2100 and 0500 hours during the months of April to September.

Initially, standard enforcement tactics were pursued by patrol officers including daily patrols and documentation of complaints especially noting those that dealt with the concerns of business management. Efforts to document complaints were continually hampered when citizens, fearing retribution upon themselves or their families, failed to consent to file formal complaints. Thus officers had little leverage when responding to calls after business hours and teenagers would simply respond to police by moving from one business location to another. An effective solution to this problem was ultimately obtained through a concerted effort of town government, local business, citizens of the community and police.

## RESPONSE

The goal of this project was to eliminate the ongoing problems of vandalism, loitering, disorderly conduct and theft experienced by the business district of Poolesville. To this end, officers first provided reassurance to the local merchants that the police department, with the cooperation of the town government would work with them to resolve the problem. Subsequently, Ofc Pavlick presented the town with several possible strategies/preventive measures, for their consideration. These included:

- \* Providing increased lighting and motion detectors in local business establishments
- \* Hiring off duty police officers as outside security
- \* Establishment of a town curfew
- \* Posting "NO TRESPASSING AFTER BUSINESS HOURS" signs

After consideration of the legal and financial aspects of these measures, the business community unanimously agreed that the most prudent course of action would be to post "NO TRESPASSING" signs through out the business district. This approach was determined to be a

cost effective measure that would provide the police with "leverage" to take the disciplinary action of writing citations without the need for citizens to file formal complaints. As a result, the Town Manager, James Alsobrook, circulated a memo to the business community on Fisher Avenue in Poolesville on December 20th, 1995, encouraging them be a part of the "NO TRESPASSING" signs project. The memo elicited an overwhelmingly positive response from the business community with 92% of all business contacted wanting to be involved with the project (Addendum II). The provision of the signs were presented to the States Attorney's Office for legal review and concurrence. The signs were then designed by Ofc Pavlick in consultation with the States Attorney and the Germantown POP Coordinator, J. J. McWilliams. Signs had to be designed to insure that every business and their closed for business hours were represented and that "no loitering" would be enforced by the law (Addendum EOI).

The town government of Poolesville purchased and installed the signs for the business community, placing signs in locations chosen to be visible to the public but not accessible to vandals. To ensure the legalities and thus the success of the "NO TRESPASSING" project, Ofc Pavlick created a standard form that would allow oficers to enforce the provisions of the loitering and trespassing after hours statute, obtained the signatures of the business owner/agent on the form and filed them with the town government center, to be utilized by officers when enforcing criminal citations. On April 30th, 1996 some thirty signs were installed by members of the town government, Ofc Pavlick and POP Coordinator of the Germantown District, J. J. McWilliams.

## ASSESSMENT

It was considered crucial to the success of the project that the no trespassing statute be vigorously enforced from the time the signs were installed, thus enabling the "word to get around" that arrests would be made. To provide a strong emphasis on the enforcement of the "no trespassing/no loitering" policy, both patrol officers and a special "beat team" unit under the direction of Sgt. Miller were assigned to patrol the business district on a daily basis using bicycles and patrol cars. Officers were instructed to ensure the rights of citizens on the property during regular business hours, while prohibiting loitering on the properties that impeded business owners from conducting business. After business hours, officers enforced the trespassing statute issuing criminal citations and barring trespassers from posted properties.

Evaluation of this project over the first three months since installation of the no trespassing signs demonstrates a significant decrease in calls for police service through out the business district. In the period May 1995 to August 1995, prior to the installation of the signs, 48 calls for service were registered. In the subsequent year (May 1996 to August 1996), following installation of the signs, only 17 calls for service were logged. This represents a 65% decrease in calls for service.

A major concern of the community at the initiation of this project was the displacement of the crime problem from the business district to the surrounding community. Crime analysis during the

first three months of this project has alleviated this fear. While calls for service have decreased in the business district, calls for service have remained constant throughout the surrounding community. Additionally, the town government has initiated several alternative projects to engage teenagers in positive and productive activities through recreational programs, and a teen center.

Additionally, as a result of this project, the Poolesville community has recognized the commitment of the Montgomery County Police Department to resolving their community's problems and has facilitated mutual cooperation and respect between the Montgomery County Police and the citizens of Poolesville. While the initial goal of this project, the amelioration of the crime problem in the Poolesville business district, has not been total accomplished, a significant decrease (65%) in the number of calls for service has resulted from this program in the first three months of its existence.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals are gratefully acknowledged for their support and commitment to making this community policing project a success:

Captain Price, District Commander, Germantown Station

Officer J.J. McWilliams, Germantown POP coordinator

Mr. James Alsobrook, Town Manager, Poolesville

The Poolesville Town Government

The Poolesville Business District and surrounding Community

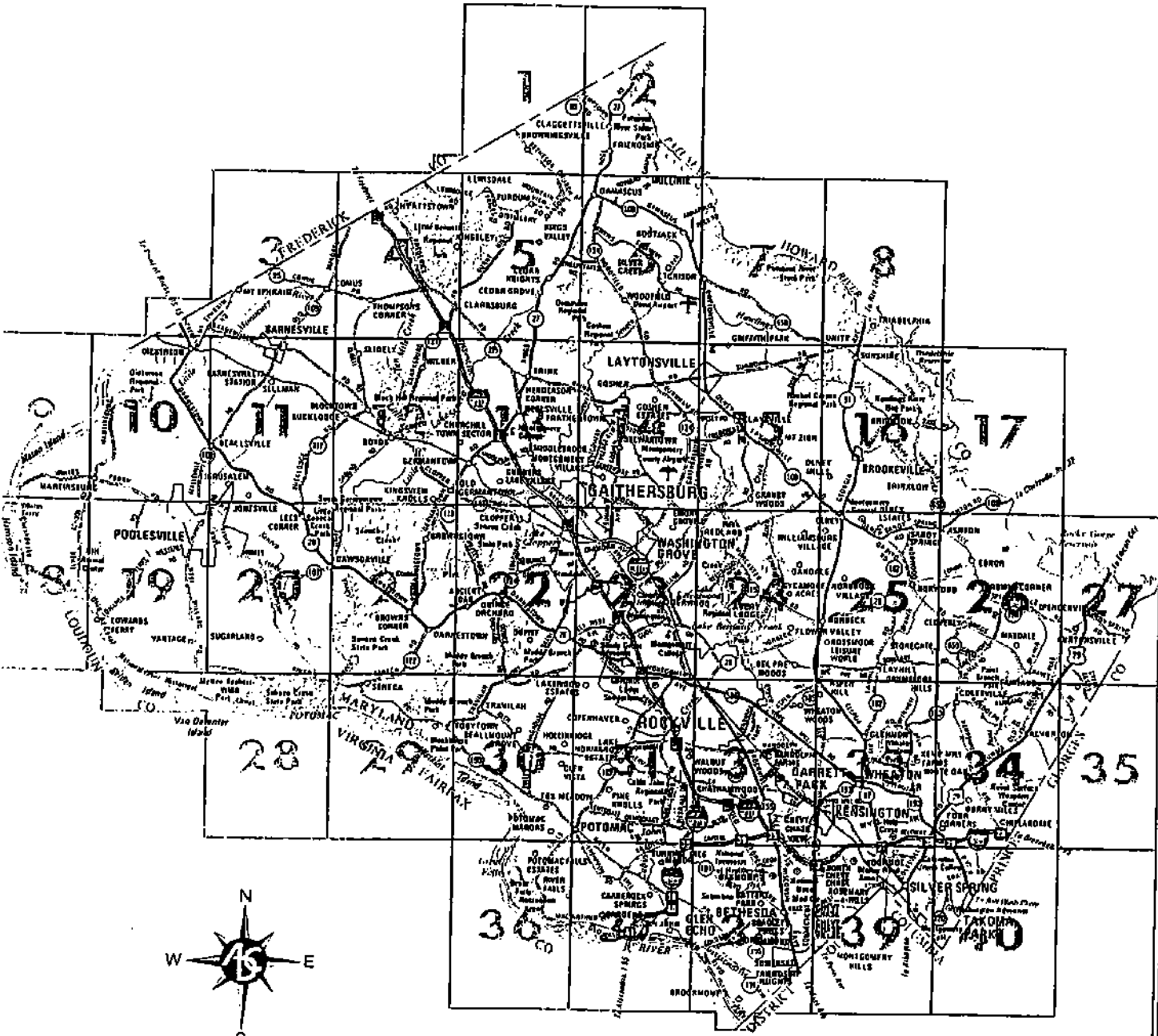
Ms. Nancy Wheeler, Editor, Poolesville Community News

Mr. Kenneth Garber, Editor, The Poolesville Gazette

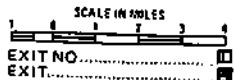
# MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.

## INDEX TO MAP SHEETS

For Additional Map Coverage See Inside Back Cover



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD.



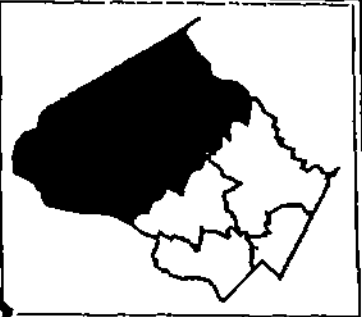
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ADDENDUM I

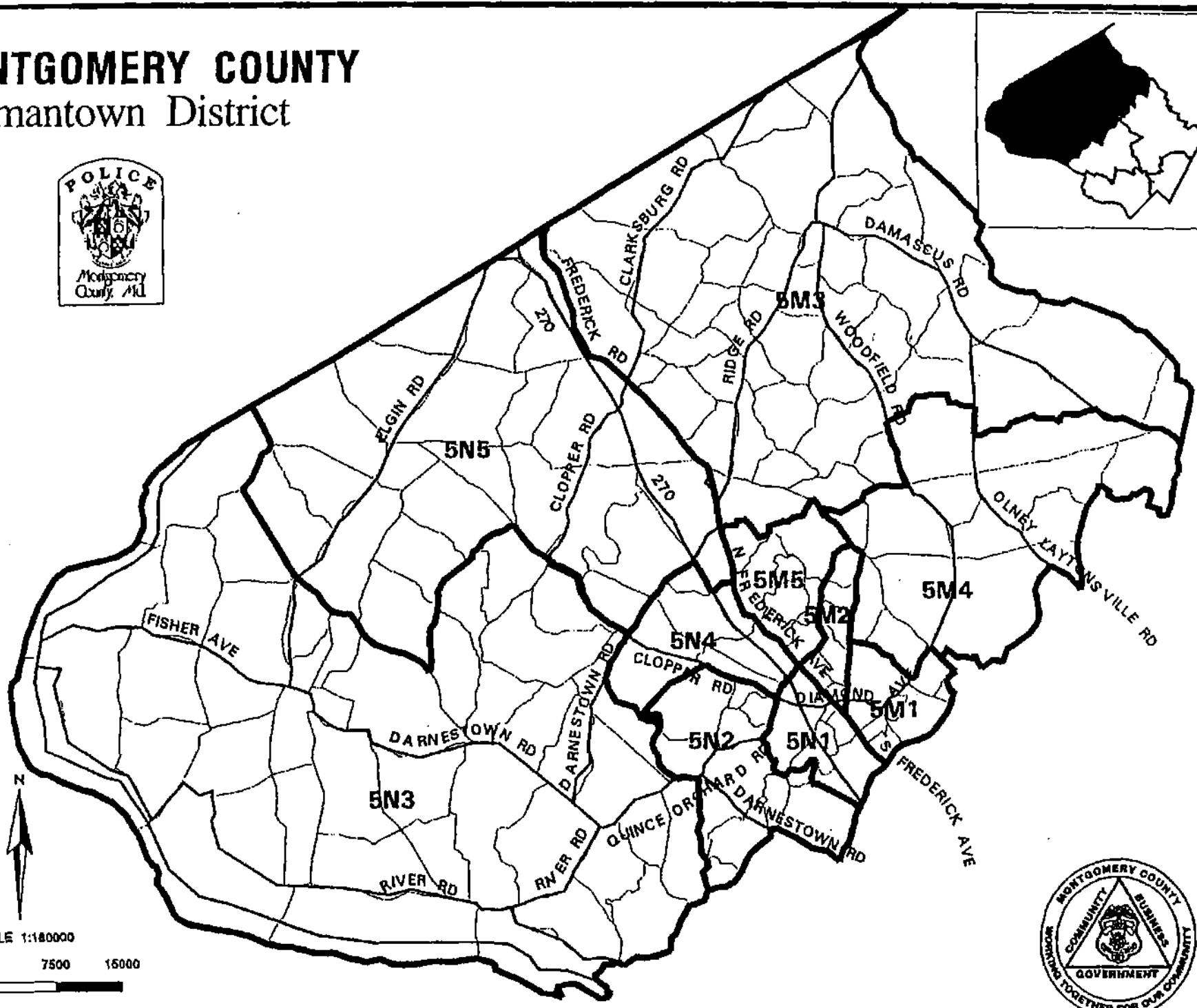


# MONTGOMERY COUNTY

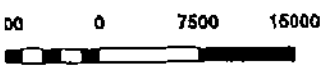
## Germantown District



APPENDIX I



SCALE 1:180000

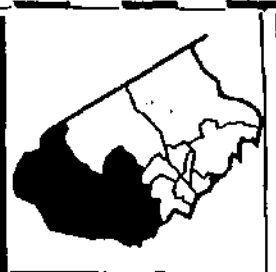


FEET





**—** FISHER AVE. BUSINESS DISTRICT



ADDENDUM I

SCALE  
1 inch = 1.94 miles

GERMANTOWN  
DISTRICT

5N3  
Area = 106.07 Sq.Mi.

BEAT