

# Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) Agenda

Friday, October 4, 2019

- I. CONSTRUCTION ISSUES IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY (GREG ROONEY)
- II. BUMP UPDATE (FOLLOW-UP TO EARLIER BRIEFING)
- III. 7000 WISCONSIN (PRESENTATION AND/OR DISCUSSION OF ALLEY ISSUES AND POSSIBLE IAC LETTER)
- IV. PROCESS FOR REPLACING MEMBERS OF THE IAC
- V. PRELIMINARY PLANNING FOR NOVEMBER, DECEMBER MEETINGS

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/area-1/bethesda-downtownplan/bethesda-downtown-implementation-advisory-committee/>

## **Meeting Notes and Attendees:**

### Attendance

#### IAC Members

Naomi Spinrad – Co-Chair  
Dedun Ingram  
Anna Fierst  
Amanda Farber  
Steve Long  
Michael Fetchko

Emily Vaias – Co-Chair  
Jad Donohue  
Jack Alexander  
Greg Rooney  
Patrick O’Neil  
Matt Gordon  
Mark Hendrickson

Jeff Burton - BUP  
Ken Hartman – Regional Services  
Cindy Gibson – Councilmember Friedson’s office  
Elza Hize-McCoy – Planning  
Stephanie Dickel – Planning

Alex Paschalides – Hensel Phelps  
Barney Silver – Boston Properties  
Kris Warner – Maier Warner PR  
Tim Eden – Starr Capital  
Todd Jacobus - Woodfield

Allan Glass – public  
Terry Long – public

#### **Farm Women’s Market Discussion** (Naomi Spinrad)

- FWM developers were recently at the DAP for project presentation prior to sketch plan going to the Planning Board (scheduled for October 24<sup>th</sup>).
- The IAC was asked by EYA to send a letter of support; a question was raised as to whether the group has sent support letters for other projects. The last IAC letter was to the Historic Preservation Commission.
- IAC agrees to send letter; a draft letter will be circulated to IAC members for approval.

**Right of Way Work Discussion** by IAC member Greg Rooney from Bernstein (developer for Marriott project) with Alex Paschalides, General Contractor for the Marriott project, and Barney Silver from Boston Properties

#### **Presentation:**

- There are issues with ROW space being taken up by construction and utility work; every site has different challenges: At the Marriott site pedestrian passages can sometimes be used but sometimes cannot, but at the Apex site (The Wilson) pedestrian passage is consistently closed on all sides of project
- Two big issues are communication and signage.
- It is not just time and money that keep sidewalks closed, but also safety/logistics.
- Sidewalk / lane closures effect both pedestrians and businesses in an area.
- There are issues with undergrounding utilities both during the day and the night; right now the Marriott project is doing about 50/50 day/night work related to utilities. They have started concrete pours at 5AM, need to do so for logistics.
- Group of developers and officials (SHA, DOT, DPS, BUP, Regional Services) meets every Friday to work on logistics and communication and maintenance of traffic plans.
- Hensel Phelps / Marriott send Friday email update on construction issues.

- They want to have a permanent pedestrian plan for Woodmont going forward; Woodmont will have plates removed and be repaved in the near future.
- It is difficult having to deal with both SHA and DOT for certain projects.
- IAC Committee formed to meet about traffic / pedestrian concerns (Greg Rooney, Emily Vaias, Naomi Spinrad, Amanda Farber, Jon Weintraub).

#### Group Discussion:

- McCoy: Planning has been working with CM Friedson's office given the need to be proactive.
- Burton: Utilities become an issue (for example WSSC) because they ask/require certain things, often with limited advance notice, or because things show up that aren't in plans.
- Ingram: Upcoming Hampden Lane project figured out in advance which sidewalks would need to remain open.
- Ingram: The DPS website showing traffic/pedestrian issues has been delayed after DPS Director Diane Schwartz Jones resigned but is still in the works.
- Burton: BUP is working on weekly email blasts.
- Burton: SHA has one permanent inspector for the whole downtown district; question – could DOT take over any SHA tasks in downtown areas (some roads, parts of Baltimore and Annapolis are controlled by their DOTs)
- Farber: When closing roads and sidewalks must think of all pedestrians (those with mobility limitations, visual impairments, etc).

#### **7000 Wisconsin Presentation** (Tim Eden and Todd Jacobus – developers; Matt Gordon; IAC member and attorney)

##### Summary of concerns (Naomi Spinrad):

- The 2-way public alley can't be left to solve itself; lots of users, flow of traffic; it is 20 feet wide, less in spots, with dumpsters, delivery trucks, cars, ad-hoc pedestrian connections that require pedestrians to walk in the alley.
- It must be adequate for current users and more to come as other properties develop.
- Back-ups at Woodmont and Wisconsin are a concern.

##### Presentation (Tim Eden and Todd Jacobus):

- Developers met with community.
- They used Wells and Associates to look at traffic patterns and numbers; made recordings, and determined the alley could easily accommodate more traffic.
- They acknowledge that it is a significant cut-through for southbound traffic and would put up signage saying "local traffic only".
- Congestion is often due to dumpsters and illegal parking; Washington Properties, which owns the property to the north, has agreed to have its tenants move the 6-7 dumpsters there.
- They will accept a long-term binding building loading management plan and require 30ft maximum length delivery trucks, which tenants will have to ensure.
- The alley is 29ft at the widest \*\*\*
- Building would provide 188 parking spaces for residents \*\*\*

- Zoning rule saying that if there is an alley with 20ft or more then you must use it; and using alley clears up Wisconsin Ave for retail and better streetscape.
- County/Planning may need to evaluate opening up Strathmore to allow southbound traffic (IAC note: Strathmore is not adjacent to subject property).

#### Group Discussion/Questions:

- Fierst: What about delivery trucks that are parked there for S&K and Washington Property shops? Developer: Trucks should be able to fit into loading areas for other properties but often don't; this needs to be enforced.
- Ingram: What about utility poles and wires in alley? Developer: Power lines will need to be dealt with; may need to be undergrounded; perhaps something like a road club improvement plan to be shared among any projects in that vicinity; there's only so much any individual property owner can do.
- Developers: Need enforcement and be able to look at how the alley functions once it is clean.
- Spinrad: Strathmore was previously closed southbound due to safety issues; Ingram: Strathmore closed about 25 years ago; with more traffic in the area now it may be even less safe to reopen it.
- Eden: Need to revisit; this is an urbanizing area; there are only so many release valves; the traffic counts with the project will be less than what it is today. We completed two 24 hour observations. Aldon advocated for Strathmore realignment (IAC note: this was during the master plan process and was not adopted). A traffic signal may be needed to normalize the intersection.
- Spinrad: The master plan only shows on a map a symbol for an enhanced intersection at Strathmore – there is no language in the plan - and that is intended to mean safety improvements. Aldon and they don't want Eden to continue to say that they support changing the Strathmore intersection.
- Eden: Both north end and south end of Strathmore (at Bradley) need to be considered.
- Spinrad: How many parking spaces total? Gordon: 125 spaces; currently in Bethesda they are working at between .6 to .8 spaces per unit which is reduced from what it used to be; many buildings have parking spaces filled with cars but more and more people are leaving their cars in those spaces and just using them at certain times or for certain activities
- Gordon: The developer is not required to study the alley but they want to make it work for their project as well
- Jacobus: We don't want to invest millions in the project and not have access work.
- Developers: it is crucial for these issues to be solved for all involved; the average truck size is 30ft; 95% of move-ins are 30-ft trucks; tenants will need to make arrangements to ensure that truck size.
- Jacobus, asked if Woodfield would keep the building: We will hold onto the building for a period of time.
- Hize-McCoy: All projects have loading issues.
- Spinrad: 7000 Wisconsin is less than ½ mile to Red line and Purple lines; why not reduce parking even more or not have parking?
- Jacobus: No parking for this project would be a non-starter
- Gordon: Project will get public benefit points for having reduced parking; .8 parking units required; there is no retail parking here.

- Donohoe: Used to require 1 space per unit; again there are fewer cars being used during workday, but still cars being parked.
- Developers: Project would generate fifty cars in the morning and forty cars in the evening spread out over an hour; Solaire wishes they had more parking.
- Farber: Does the building go up to the building line on the alley? Gordon: yes but it is recessed a bit for the garage entrance.
- Jacobus: We have videos of 30ft trucks during business hours and they can fit.
- Developers: Still need to go through architectural plans; we are planning to go to the DAP on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Spinrad: Concern that project should come back to the IAC; once it has DAP approval granted seems late in the process.
- Vaias: We shouldn't worry too much about them coming back to IAC before/after DAP; we can have meaningful input when it gets to the Planning Board.
- Hize-McCoy: DAP is meant for architectural review, but public can still provide testimony; staff and Planning Board can add conditions; door doesn't close until final approval; still needs to go through DOT review.
- Rooney: Doesn't think it is efficient to have every project come through the IAC many times; some other projects only come through once.
- Spinrad: Some projects warrant more attention; still have concerns.
- Alexander: Appreciates the applicants time; doesn't think projects should necessarily have to keep coming back
- Gordon: We will come back after the DAP.

### **Future IAC Meetings**

- November - Planning Staff will present information on the General Plan
- December – Subdivision Staging Plan; Succession Planning for IAC; possibly Streetscape Plans