

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)

Agenda

Friday, February 5, 2021, 8AM (Virtual Meeting)

Notes to be taken by Patrick O'Neill

- I. **PRESENTATION / Q&A WITH COUNCILMEMBER ANDREW FRIEDSON: ZTA 20-07 IN RELATION TO THE BETHESDA DOWNTOWN PLAN** (30 minutes).
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/zta/20/20/ZTA%2020-07.pdf>
- II. **DISCUSSION: IAC RESPONSE TO ZTA 20-07** (15 minutes)
- III. **BETHESDA URBAN PARTNERSHIP: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES**
(Jeff Burton) (15 Minutes)
- IV. **REFRESHER / DISCUSSION WITH LESLYE HOWERTON ON THE ROLE OF THE IAC AND HOW BEST TO FULFILL THAT ROLE GOING FORWARD**
(20 minutes)
- V. **NEW BUSINESS?**
(as needed to close of meeting)
- VI. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**
Next meeting Friday, March 5, 2021.

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

Meeting Notes and Attendees

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 AM.

Notes taken by Patrick O'Neil

Introduction of new IAC member, Vince Burke (Saul Companies), who is replacing Emily Vaias.

I. PRESENTATION / Q&A WITH COUNCILMEMBER ANDREW FRIEDSON: ZTA 20-07 IN RELATION TO THE BETHESDA DOWNTOWN PLAN (30 minutes).
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/zta/2020/ZTA%2020-07.pdf>

Councilmember Andrew Friedson summarized ZTA 20-07 as an effort to provide “Missing Middle” housing in R-60 zoned properties within a mile radius of Metro Stations. He then stated that, while he supports Missing Middle housing, he does not support the ZTA. The County Council had set up a broader process for analyzing Missing Middle opportunities, including the accommodation of such housing along key corridors. If this larger effort were allowed to play out, Mr. Friedson believes that a good Missing Middle plan could help address some housing supply issues in the County. The current ZTA is premature and Councilmember Riemer is expected to communicate another, more comprehensive approach for addressing Missing Middle housing. Mr. Friedson expects to support this effort.

IAC members noted that the Planning Board also wants to address Missing Middle housing in a broader, more nuanced way, such as through the ongoing Thrive Montgomery Plan. They further discussed where and how the ZTA would impact Bethesda and that it usurps the current Floating Zone recommendation for the Sacks neighborhood.

Questions were asked about the ZTA’s chances of success and whether it was linked to the rent control measure also introduced by Councilmember Jawando. Mr. Friedson was skeptical about the ZTA’s chance of success. He further stated that he did not support the rent control effort, noting that entry to affordable housing is the issue. The rent control measure encourages condo products/conversion, which avoid the entry question.

II. DISCUSSION: IAC RESPONSE TO ZTA 20-07 (15 minutes)

IAC members then discussed how/if the Committee would oppose the ZTA. The Committee voted unanimously to send a letter to the Council opposing the ZTA and noting that the ZTA's objectives should be part of a larger discussion.

III. BETHESDA URBAN PARTNERSHIP: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES (Jeff Burton) (15 Minutes)

Mr. Burton gave an overview of current efforts underway at BUP: pruning street trees, Streetery tents, keeping Norfolk Avenue closed (proposal), gift card program for Bethesda businesses, Facebook live concert series, virtual film festival, and current branding campaign.

IV. REFRESHER / DISCUSSION WITH LESLYE HOWERTON ON THE ROLE OF THE IAC AND HOW BEST TO FULFILL THAT ROLE GOING FORWARD (20 minutes)

Ms. Howerton provided background information on how the IAC was a recommendation by the Bethesda Downtown Plan to work with public (or quasi-public institutions) regarding the implementation of Plan goals. By design, the IAC was to be comprised of a balance between business and residential perspectives.

The suggested areas of focus for the IAC were Downtown Plan funding opportunities (e.g. BUMP, CIP projects, and OMB budget process).

The IAC then discussed with Ms. Howerton the best time for the Committee to weigh in on development projects. Ms. Howerton noted that Planning Staff encourages development applicants to come before the IAC, while acknowledging that the IAC does not have a formal regulatory review role. IAC members expressed an interest in knowing when permits have been issued for projects so the community can prepare appropriately for construction impacts. One member suggested that the IAC review and prioritize Downtown Plan improvement projects.

V. NEW BUSINESS?

None

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next meeting Friday, March 5, 2021.