

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)

**Minutes of the meeting on Friday, April 2, 2021.
Virtual Meeting was called to order at 8:05 AM**

I. PRESENTATION / OVERALL PARK PROJECT BRIEFING, including PIP
(Hyojung Garland - Supervisor, Park Planning; Brenda Sandberg -
Supervisor, Real Estate Management).

Ms. Hyojung Garland and Ms. Brenda Sandberg gave a presentation on the Park Inventory Status, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process, and the Park Impact Payment (PIP). Selected highlights of the parks progress both proposed and existing were presented.

Three proposed projects that have been worked on during the past year were discussed. First was the Capital Crescent Trail Civic Green near the Purple Line and the Metro Station. The goal is to start as soon as the Purple Line station area is completed. The land was acquired in 2017. A new design-build contract for the Purple Line is under negotiation with potential to have a new contractor in the fall of 2021. Facility planning for the Civic Green is expected to start in fall of 2022. Budget from the PIP is \$500,000.

The second proposed project presented was the Farm Women's Market Civic Green which would be on part or all of Lots 24 and 10 above a proposed underground garage on this property. In 2019, two options were discussed with the developer--one which includes Lot 10 and Lot 24 and a second one which excludes these two lots. The preferred option is Option 1. As of late 2020, property appraisal and a conceptual deal structure were agreed upon between the developer and DOT. The developer is working on a budget for the overall project in 2021.

The third proposed project presented was Veterans Park Civic Green. One property has been acquired and Park and Planning staff hope to acquire other surrounding properties. Four options were presented.

Two existing projects were highlighted. The Elm Street Urban Park design is underway to renovate the park in conjunction with the Capital Crescent Trail surface route. Improvements include a playground, fitness equipment, and improvements to the pedestrian entrance plaza. The second existing project, the Caroline Freeland Urban Park, is entirely funded through the CIP. Final design will happen in FY 2022 and construction will occur in FY 2023 and FY 2024.

The CIP planning process for FY 2023-2028 begins in April with CIP strategy sessions with the Planning Board. Discussion will include determining what are the big issues and priorities over the next few years. In mid-June there will be public forums for testimony and comments. By November 1, 2021, CIP projects will be submitted to the County Executive.

PIP has a balance of \$9.6 million to purchase properties and then develop them for parks. A total of \$16.2 million has been approved by the Planning Board through Site Plans. Of this total, \$7.0 million has been spent on Phase 1 of the Veteran Civic Green for acquisitions and \$500,000 is earmarked for Capital Crescent Civic Green facility planning in FY 2022. There is a shortfall of almost \$6.5 million. However, in the next few years several millions of dollars are expected to help with this shortfall. Some of these funds will be used for Veterans Park.

There was a discussion about whether PIP funds could be used to help the successful Shared Street program created during the Pandemic. Some funds given to the County by a business owner went to DOT for the Shared Street program. DOT funds should be used for the Shared Street program, not PIP funds. There was also a discussion about the status of updating agreements between the County and JBG on the Crescent Trail at Bethesda Avenue in front of the JBG building. Finally, there was a question about acquiring two properties adjacent to the Battery Lane Park to expand the park. The Park and Planning Office continues to work on this.

II. PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION OF THE BETHESDA DOWNTOWN PLAN DENSITY CAP, including how best to use the monitoring and tracking web page, and how density is counted for purposes of the cap (Leslye Howerton, Master Planning Supervisor, Planning; Stephanie Dickel, Regulatory Supervisor, Planning).

Ms. Leslye Howerton presented an update on the CAP and Bethesda Overlay Zone (BOZ). The Bethesda Sector Plan created a BOZ to ensure transparency and accountability in implementing the Sector Plan. To help the Park and Planning Department monitor this they created an online Monitoring and Tracking Program. A 32.4 million square feet cap was established in the Bethesda Sector Plan. Once applications for development have a final Site Plan or Preliminary Plan approval, the projects move into the tracking phase and are counted against the overall Cap. Data in this online tracking system includes: Project base and proposed density, amount of BOZ density requested by the project, amount of Park Impact Payment (PIP) being paid, the number of MPDUs (if applicable), residential square footage and the number of dwelling units, the total density allocated by the Planning Board at site plan, and the remaining density available based on Site Plan Allocations/Approvals.

Projects approved that predate the 2017 Sector Plan will be accounted for in the “Approved Unbuilt” column. If projects are in the pipeline and do not move forward, there is a time limit and the developer loses site plan approval.

Once the 32.4 million CAP is reached, the Planning Staff will ask the Council to determine if they want to take any action with respect to the CAP, which could include to reopen the Bethesda Master Plan and increase the CAP. The Bethesda Monitoring and Tracking report is provided to the IAC annually and is expected to be ready in late April for review.

If a project requests more density it could be approved by increasing MPDUs from 15% up to 24%. Also at 24% MPDUs, no PIP is required to be provided by the developer.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Amanda Farber informed the IAC of the Housing Equity Advisory Team (HEAT), a new advisory team to Planning staff of which she is a member. HEAT was established in connection with the Attainable Housing Initiative. It consists of County stakeholders and includes developers (both for-profit and non-profit), a realtor, civic activists, housing activists, an economist, and a person from the banking industry. The objective is for HEAT to provide Planning staff with an understanding of different perspectives and knowledge about housing policy, including ZTA, missing middle housing, attainable housing, etc. There will be four meetings between March 24 and May 19, 2021. Ms. Farber will send an email to all IAC members providing more information on HEAT. Ms. Lisa Govoni is the staff contact and it was suggested that she be asked to present at our meeting next month. The housing matters under consideration would have an impact on the IAC area. There are many new terms being put forward, for example, complete communities and missing middle, and it is not clear what impact they will have on Bethesda.

7070 Arlington Road Project – Presentation is scheduled for the May meeting

Ideas for future agendas? (not discussed due to time constraints)

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next meeting Friday, May 7, 2021.

Meeting ended at 9:35

V. ATTENDEES

IAC: Joyce Gwadz (Co-Chair), Amanda Farber, Michael Fetchko, Dedun Ingram, Naomi Spinrad, Susan Wegner, Stephen Long, Jack Alexander, (Co-Chair), Jad, Donahoe, Patrick O’Neil, Matthew Gordon, and Christopher Smith

Montgomery County Planning Department: Leslye Howerton, Stephanie Dickel, and Emily Balmer

Montgomery County Parks: Hyojung Garland and Brenda Sandberg

BCC Regional Services Center: Ken Hartman and Derrick Harrigan

Bethesda Urban Partnership: Jeff Burton

Councilmember Friedson's staff: Aaron Kraut

Bethesda Green: Adam Roberts

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