

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) Meeting Notes Friday, November 5, 2021, 8AM (Virtual Meeting)

Notes taken by Amanda Farber

PRESENTATION – BETHESDA STREETERIES: STATUS AND FUTURE PLANS; UPDATE ON DOWNTOWN BETHESDA (20 minutes) Jeff Burton, Executive Director, Bethesda Urban Partnership

- Working on plan to continue streeery as a semi-permanent installation along Norfolk Ave.
- Three blocks included in the plans: Fairmont to St Elmo – concerts, stage, event space such as for the winter wonderland; St Elmo to Cordell – mostly streeery areas, pavilions for seating; Cordell to Del Ray – family play area, AstroTurf, seating.
- Will be implemented in sections over time as there are short-term and longer-term plans for that area; can avoid some permitting issues if done as a semi-permanent project for now and then possibly work on a road abandonment process in coordination with DOT - but that would require additional time and public input. Design done by the end of the year and BUP wants to implement first block (St Elmo and Cordell) spring 2022.
- A streeery committee has been meeting regarding design; DOT 100% supportive; DOT starting CIP study of shared streets – moving more towards parks and open space; that could help with funding along with other contributions. BUP paid for streeery design; implementation will need to be paid for by a variety of sources.
- Hyojung Garland – Master Planner / Supervisor Parks, Park Planning and Stewardship; excited about park concept streeery design – request to include the Parks Department in the conversation as they are currently working on updating the PROS (Park, Recreation, and Open Space) Plan and POPS (Privately Owned Public Space) inventory; once streeery design finalized Jeff Burton will share with Parks; Elza Hisel-McCoy currently on the streeery committee from Park and Planning.
- Woodmont streeery – will be in place at least through March as part of DOT initiative; DOT said Woodmont is a bypass and arterial road so unlikely to be permanent closure; depends on traffic volumes.
- Michael Fetchko noted the Battery Lane District is excited for the streeery to remain; question on how planned bike lanes would be incorporated? Jeff Burton indicated the roadway must maintain an 11 ft wide lane for emergency vehicles, and will double as bike lane.
- Dedun Ingram noted BUP should investigate surface alternative other than AstroTurf.
- Question as to when Elm Street will open again? Can't open until purple line work further along; comment that the Elm Street closure makes traffic flow around the Woodmont closure more difficult.
- Question as to whether money from the amenity fund can or should be used to implement streeery plans. Elza Hisel-McCoy noted if IAC is in support of using amenity fund money for the streeery then could write a letter; Jack Alexander, Joyce Gwadz, and Amanda Farber will help

draft a letter of support for streetery funding (working with Jeff Burton) to be circulated before the December IAC meeting.

- Other BUP updates - One more Friday concert but no concerts during the winter, will resume next spring/summer; Bethesda Bucks program is back and can be used at any participating retailer in downtown Bethesda; working on a shop local initiative; Dec 4th – scaled down winter wonderland event in Veterans Park / streetery area, chorus, ice sculpting, likely no Santa; Asset Map – economic development tool in conjunction with the International Downtown Association will include 3D map with many features including commercial office, places of interest, hotels, projects.

PRESENTATION –BETHESDA URBAN LOADING AND DELIVERY MANAGEMENT STUDY (20 minutes) Elza Hisel-McCoy, Division Chief, Down-county Planning; Iftin Thompson, Multimodal Transportation Planner Coordinator, Downcounty Master Planning

- Study completion delayed because Planning Department is short staffed and working on other plans, but it is still moving forward and includes a high-level review of issues and potential solutions.
- Downtown Bethesda case study/pilot; then take to other urban areas
- Many stakeholders interviewed for observations and feedback; study done through equity policy lens; Planning staff performed site visits in Bethesda and other jurisdictions. (Downtown Crown, North Bethesda, Mosaic)
- Planning staff have found that most loading occurs along the curb – delivery vehicles obstruct traffic lanes; loading often conflict with sidewalks, streets, and bike lanes – need to balance loading with other uses.
- Potential alternatives/solutions based on three areas: Design – laybys, physical separation of trash, designated loading zone; Enforcement – fines, education; Policy – permitting, strategies such as Amazon lockers.
- Pilot projects could be considered which have consolidated loading zones, loading signage, utilize local parking garages as micro-loading areas.
- Every site is different and lots going on in confined space so must have a menu of options, also depends on whether a new project or existing condition
- Question about who would be an enforcer? Planning staff met with police and they don't typically handle enforcement; would need to be separate dedicated parking patrols; many major delivery companies have ticket budgets so ticketing is not a huge incentive.
- Question – master plan and design guidelines; would these guidelines be pulled in? Response – not guidelines; just a study at this point; stakeholders need to provide input.
- Question – how would Amazon lockers fit in – are they the only company that has lockers? What about other companies? Residential property owners could provide lockers. DHL also has smaller distribution hubs in places. This is an issue everywhere. May see more micro distribution.
- Need for deeper dedicated space for deliveries noted.
- Question/Comment – Amazon Hub - every company can deliver to it

- Question -- how are roadblocks prevented with lockers since delivery companies still have to park and get out of the car? Makes the stops shorter; but still need loading space.
- Comment -- Pull through loading – may work well at 7900 Wisconsin; seeing more developers pursuing that; needs to fit the block
- Comment – difference with grocery stores; package delivery won't go into loading dock; need curbside
- Covid changed how parking used; drop off/ pick up spaces added.
- Next step is to present study to planning board.

**PRESENTATION – FARM WOMENS' MARKET PROJECT UPDATE (10 minutes) Dedun Ingram, IAC Member; Chair, Land Use and Long-Range Planning Committee, Town of Chevy Chase
GROUP DISCUSSION – FARM WOMENS' MARKET PROJECT – IAC LETTER OF SUPPORT? IAC Members**

- Town of Chevy Chase (TOCC) has voted unanimously to put forward to town residents to help convert Lots 10 and 24 to parks; public hearing next week at Town Council
- TOCC will contribute up to 25% of the costs (cap of \$4M) of the amount the county is contributing toward the project; may vote to make proposal official after the public hearing
- EYA / Bernstein would like to bring preliminary plan and site plan in early spring; want to make sure would have funding; this is incentive to get it moving
- PLD doing study to see how many parking spaces to underground and financial state of PLD (200 spaces for public parking – study checking if that is the right number); estimated costs \$22-25M; \$7M for use of Lot 24; remaining amount would need to be covered by the County; estimated \$65,000 per space (comment noting that it could be up to \$100,000)
- Final design still needed but the sketch plan completed in 2019 included pavilion behind the FWM approved by Historic Preservation Commission, and 7121 building and part of Lot 24; developer hired landscape architect.
- Cindy Gibson – negotiation still ongoing with CE and developers; project had been scaled back which left a funding gap; IAC letter now to encourage project to move forward could be helpful; budget being developed now; may want to address park priorities; PIP and CIP money for this project not earmarked yet; easier to get things into the budget when CE crafting it than when at Council.
- Largest amount of open space available to downtown Bethesda to serve new residents and can provide amenities that other parks don't provide.
- Elza Hisel McCoy – more parks recommended than PIP money available.
- Could be beneficial if IAC wrote a letter in support.
- Don't need to weigh in on parking; in terms of amenities one of the most important park projects, will serve a lot of people, can support the implementation; would be nice for people to see progress toward making it a central gathering place; retail component of FWM also makes in a gathering place.
- Comment – One possible solution would be to reduce parking restrictions in Town of Chevy Chase; Response -- that is unlikely, but Town will be making major financial contribution.
- Dedun Ingram will work on draft letter for IAC to review by December meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS - The next meeting will be Friday, December 3, 2021

- Will have draft letters circulated prior to December meeting.
- HOC / Bradley project at December meeting; suggestion to have 4901 Battery Lane (presented to DAP already).
- Need one additional residential member – planning staff received 2 self-nominations; planning staff scheduled to go to the board to reinstate the current committee members.
- Will aim to meet in person in December; will find out if room available at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center. Noted that White Flint group started meeting in person again.

Attendees:

Dedun Ingram, Town of Chevy Chase
Jack Alexander, AMR Commercial
Joyce Gwadz, Edgemoor
Naomi Spinrad, Chevy Chase West
Michael Fetchko, Battery Lane
Jeff Burton, Bethesda Urban Partnership
Patrick L. O'Neil, Lerch, Early & Brewer
Rachel Newhouse, Montgomery Parks
Christopher Smith, Stonebridge
Jad Donohoe, Donohoe
Hyojung Garland, Montgomery Parks
Iftin Thompson, Montgomery Planning
Amanda Farber, EBCA
Adam Roberts, Bethesda Green
Thomas C. Dant, BCC Regional Services
Elza Hisel-McCoy, Montgomery Planning
Peter C. Fosselman, BCC Regional Services
Cindy Gibson, Montgomery County Government
Matthew Gordon, Selzer Gurvitch
Vince Burke, B. F. Saul Company
Emily Balmer, Montgomery Planning