



Bethesda Downtown
Implementation Advisory Committee
Est. 2017

Jack Alexander
 Co-Chair
 Commercial Rep

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)
Agenda Friday, January 17, 2025, 8:00 AM

Amanda Farber
 Co-Chair
 Residential Rep

Location: Offices of The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce 7910
Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1204, Bethesda, MD 20814

Jad Donohoe
 Commercial Rep

Notes taken by Michael Fetchko

In attendance: Jack Alexander, Dedun Ingram, Amanda Farber, Matt Gordon, Andy O’Hare, Dave Yampolsky, Patrick O’Neil, Naomi Spinrad, Jad Donohoe, Joyce Gwadz, Michael Fetchko, Stacey Band, Andrew Saul

Dedun Ingram
 Residential Rep

Other Participants: District 1 County Councilmember Andrew Friedson (in person)

Matthew Gordon
 Commercial Rep

I. Annual Bethesda Monitoring Report

Joyce Gwadz
 Residential Rep

- Send IAC comments in letter for inclusion in appendix of report for Planning Board (first paragraph of proposed letter was edited and agreed to by IAC members present).

Patrick O’Neil
 Commercial Rep

- Report should include same facts each year in clear, understandable format so IAC and other residents can follow progress.

Naomi Spinrad
 Residential Rep

- Should use tables to present data.

Michael Fetchko
 Residential Rep

- Report has more ‘filler’ than actual monitoring facts.

Christopher Smith
 Commercial Rep

- How is county wide school information reported? Are the school size/limitation issues reported more of a problem for MCPS to address than for Planning?

Andy O’Hare
 Residential Rep

- No parent wants to move children mid-year. Even if done, better transportation is needed. Bethesda-Chevy Chase Elementary needs attention.

Andrew Saul
 Commercial Rep

- Should IAC meet with MCPS representatives to discuss?

Stacey Wolf
 Residential Rep

II. Conversation with Councilmember Friedson

David Yampolsky
 Commercial Rep

- Meeting previously suggested by Friedson Chief of Staff Cindy Gibson to advocate for new parks per Bethesda Downtown Plan and to explore additional sources of park funding besides PIP.
- IAC should be advocates of BDP to other groups; should also combine efforts with other groups with similar goals.
- Recreation Center: 'promising possibilities' highlighted in Minor Master Plan Amendment; should be noted to all private developers as potential sources of land and building partnerships like Elizabeth Square in Silver Spring.
- Requirements/Amenities needed to support all age and other demographic groups (eg, exercise and social outlet for an aging population).
- Review of history of Silver Spring Recreation Center development that included county planning, private land, and private construction; eventually included housing, recreation center, pool, etc – 'full service')
- Bethesda needs: Decide what our 'full service' center needs to include; where to find 60K to 80K sf for everything wanted (preliminary facilities list exists in CIP as a start for plan).
- Most important is to establish a partnership with land owner, developer first before any possibility of moving ahead; HOC, who now has multiple properties in Bethesda on south, north, and east ends is a good possible partner.
- Review of advocacy/outreach process Poolesville used to plan and build their recreation center and high school.
- Review capital budget process (eg, two year vs six year review); understand the cycle and how to get project included.
- Best Plan for Success: Get conversations started now to assess need and build demand, which will get attention of development partner. Must identify needs/wants and find group of community leaders who will regularly meet and advocate. Work with CAB, who is also advocating for a Recreation Center.
- Money besides PIP comes from same sources that everyone else uses; again, be good and consistent advocates of the recreation center to obtain additional funds.

- IAC: Two parcels on Montgomery Avenue exist, and IAC has advocated for purchasing them as new park land, but suggestion was dismissed – next step? Friedson has and will continue to encourage having Parks work better with IAC on such possibilities but cannot direct Parks what to buy or not; go back to them with reasons why those parcels are a good purchase.

- IAC: Why must Parks deal with county permitting logjam? Two county groups should be able to work better together more easily.

- IAC: Veterans Park expansion is seemingly stuck due to unusable property purchase – what was the decision making process there? Friedson notes that Parks intended to be a stakeholder in the development process of that area, using purchased property in ‘creative’ way to provide two priorities: new affordable housing and park expansion. (IAC: The creative opportunity is not obvious to us or others.)

- IAC: How can we convince Parks to embrace all such park land opportunities when they arise, regardless of directions in BDP? Properties not considered in 2017 may become available now, and Parks should be able to respond quickly. Friedson suggests an IAC/Parks reset meeting to work on opportunities to work together.

- IAC: Can we get the Norfolk Avenue Streetery back on track? How can the problems that contributed to its closure be overcome? Are new laws needed? Friedson suggests working with BUP again. While it was popular and well used, disturbances that caused closure of a public amenity are difficult to address (‘We don’t have the legal mechanisms to address them.’). Still in discussion about what is possible – eg, Weekends only? Memorial Day to Labor Day only? Allow vehicles only at very slow speeds?

- IAC: Can Woodmont return to a two-way street for its entire length? Friedson does not think that is likely now.

III. Montgomery Avenue parcels purchase revisited

- Send response to Parks with positive re-enforcement of our points to facilitate more conversation.

IV. 2025 Co-Chairs

- Resident members chose Amanda Farber as co-chair

- Business members chose Jack Alexander as co-chair

- Congratulations and Thank You to both

V. Dedun Ingram will edit final IAC letter in response to Monitoring Report with agreed changes; new co-chairs will sign and send.

VI. IAC should draft new letter restating support for recreation center as a priority.

VII. Next meeting is Friday, February 7, 2025, in hybrid format. We will look into using the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce offices.