

2024 BETHESDA DOWNTOWN PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT



Description

Review of the 2024 Bethesda Downtown Plan Annual Monitoring Report and approve to transmit to County Council.

COMPLETED: 1/23/2025

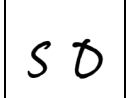
PLANNING BOARD HEARING DATE: 1/30/2025

MCPB ITEM NO. 5

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SUMMARY

- The 2024 Bethesda Downtown Plan Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) provides an update on the implementation of the transportation, parks, and schools recommendations of the 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Plan* since last year's report.
- Since the 2023 AMR, staff has moved the broad range of information contained within the AMR to Montgomery Planning's website for the Sector Plan to provide more readily accessible information. Staff will update the website at least every six months.
- Staff provided the draft AMR to the Bethesda Downtown Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) for their review on January 6, 2025. Comments provided by the IAC are included in Attachment A.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

ANNUAL MONITORING GETS A NEW LOOK

Since the adoption of the *Bethesda Downtown Plan* (BDP) in 2017, staff has annually produced a monitoring report as recommended by the Plan. This report is presented to the Planning Board during the summer months and then posted on the BDP website shortly thereafter. While the original intent of the monitoring report was to provide a concise update on transportation, schools, and parks recommendations of the Sector Plan, the content and length has grown over the past six years.

Since the last AMR in 2023, staff has been working to migrate the information from the AMR online document to a new implementation monitoring page¹ to be updated twice a year. Henceforth, the formal AMR to be presented to the Planning Board and transmitted to the County Council will consist of a more abbreviated review of implementation progress for recommendations on, and the current status of, transportation, parks, and schools.

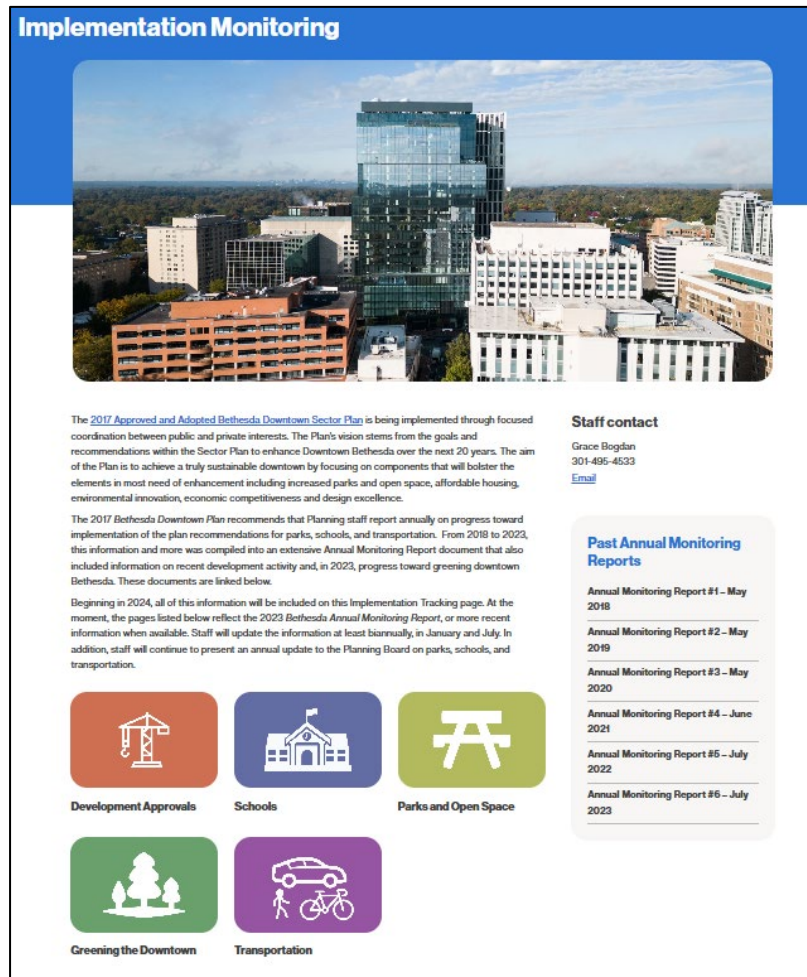


Figure 1: View of new website

¹ <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/communities/downcounty/bethesda-downtown-plan/implementation-monitoring/>

SECTION 2: TRANSPORTATION

ROADWAY NETWORK PERFORMANCE

In alternating years, the AMR provides detailed information on progress toward the Plan's NADMS goals and the results of the Road Adequacy Test. The Road Adequacy Network will be reported in even-numbered years and the NADMS goal in odd-numbered years.

AVERAGE VEHICLE DELAY

The Road Adequacy Test uses the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) methodology, which estimates average seconds of delay per vehicle², and evaluated 16 key intersections within and surrounding the Plan Area during morning and evening peak periods as shown in Figure 2. The test results are based on traffic counts collected during spring 2024.

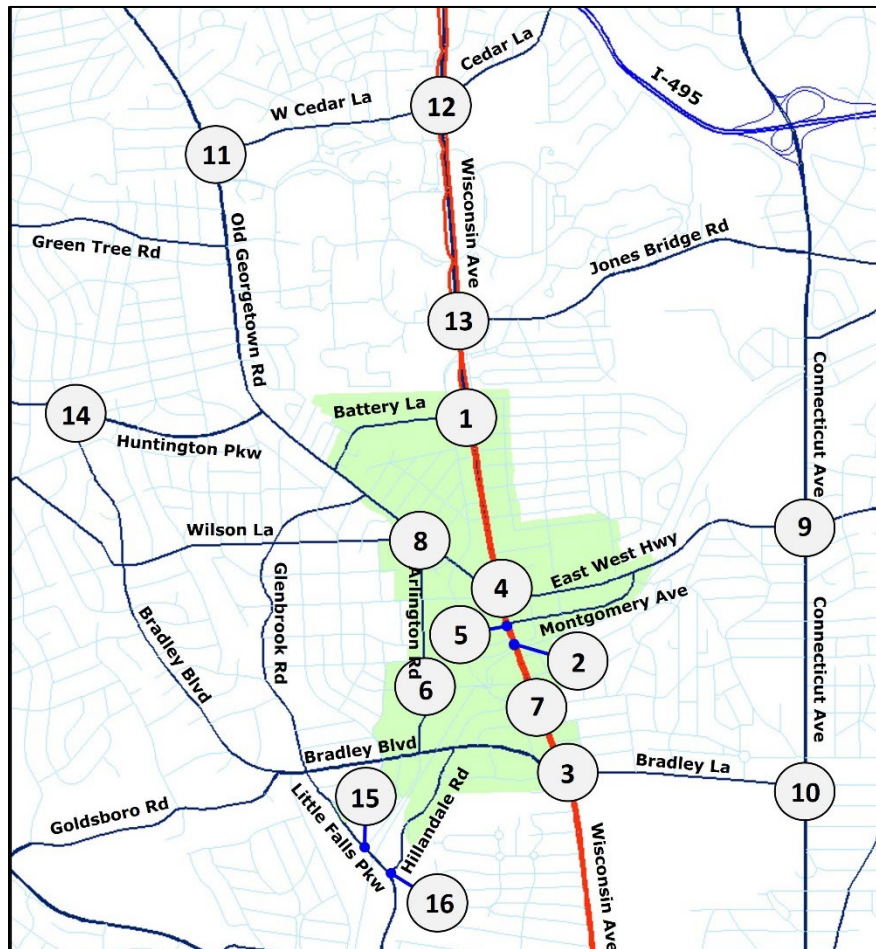


Figure 2: Map locating 16 intersections evaluated

² Average vehicle delay is an estimation of the delay the average vehicle experiences when traveling through an intersection, with a weighted average for the intersection as a whole. This is calculated based on inputs such as observed traffic volumes (peak hour traffic counts), the total number of lanes in each direction, the width of the lanes, the length of the traffic signal cycle.

Eight intersections are within the Plan Area, which also shares the same boundary as the Bethesda Central Business District (CBD) policy area. The remaining eight intersections studied are located on the periphery of the Plan Area as gateways into downtown Bethesda. Two of them, Jones Bridge Road at Rockville Pike (#13 on Figure 2) and Cedar Lane at Rockville Pike (#12 on Figure 2), are located within the Medical Center policy area. A third, East-West Highway at Connecticut Avenue (#9 on Figure 2), is located along the boundary between the orange Bethesda-Chevy Chase policy area and the red Chevy Chase Lake policy area. The remaining five gateway intersections, including two intersections newly added in response to a request from the Bethesda IAC, Little Falls Parkway at Arlington Road (#15 on Figure 2) and at Hillandale Road (#16 on Figure 2), are located within the orange Bethesda-Chevy Chase policy area.

Since the annual monitoring of Bethesda began in 2018, evaluation of these intersections has spanned over three Growth and Infrastructure Policy (GIP) periods (2016–2020, 2020–2024, and 2024–2028). Intersections in red policy areas were initially evaluated with a delay standard of 120 seconds /avg. vehicle per the 2016–2020 *Subdivision Staging Policy*, however beginning in 2020 the Growth and Infrastructure Policy no longer evaluated motor vehicle system adequacy for subdivision applications in red policy areas (i.e. a delay standard is no longer applied in red policy areas). The 2022 Annual Monitoring Report applied the 120 seconds /avg. vehicle delay standard to intersections in red policy areas for consistency purposes with previous monitoring reports. However, since the County Council recently adopted the 2024–2028 *Growth and Infrastructure Policy*, which continues to not evaluate motor system adequacy in red policy areas, the AMR is no longer applying a delay standard for any intersection located in a red policy area.

Table 1 includes the detailed analysis results. The results show that:

- During the monitoring period (2018 through 2024), all intersections experienced average delay of less than 120 seconds per vehicle except at two intersections in 2020:³ Rockville Pike / Jones Bridge Road (AM peak hour) and Connecticut Avenue / Bradley Lane (PM peak hour), as traffic is able to distribute/circulate along a relatively robust grid street network.
- During Spring 2024, the delay during the AM and PM peak periods for all 5 intersections subject to the Growth and Infrastructure Policy motor vehicle adequacy test did not exceed the traffic delay standard in their respective policy areas.
- The average vehicle delay has remained consistent between 2022 and 2024 in not exceeding the Growth and Infrastructure Policy traffic delay standard in policy areas subject to the motor vehicle adequacy test.
- Intersections that have exceeded the standard are improving. In 2020, the average vehicle delay exceeded the standard during the PM peak period at the Bradley Lane and Connecticut Avenue intersection and during the AM peak period at Jones Bridge Road and Rockville Pike. Delay at both intersections has improved substantially since 2020 and are now within the congestion standard.

³ Note that the 2020 AMR used counts collected in 2019.

Table 1: Average Vehicle Delay Analysis

ID	East-West Road	North-South Road	HCM Delay Standard (sec)	2020 Annual Report		2022 Annual Report		2024 Annual Report	
				Count Year	Delay (sec) AM/PM	Count Year	Delay (sec) AM/PM	Count Year	Delay (sec) AM/PM
1	Battery Lane	Wisconsin Avenue	NA ¹	2019	36.7/28.4	2022	32.4/62.1	2024	31.7/43.5
2	Elm Street	Wisconsin Avenue	NA ¹	2019	3.2/4.0	2022	14.0/7.4	2024	15.4/7.6
3	Bradley Boulevard	Wisconsin Avenue	NA ¹	2019	67.8/45.6	2022	46.0/61.4	2024	38.7/45.8
4	East-West Highway	Wisconsin Avenue/ Old Georgetown Road	NA ¹	2019	31.3/31.5	2022	23.8/33.0	2024	29.8/39.1
5	Montgomery Avenue	Wisconsin Avenue	NA ¹	2019	16.5/19.1	2022	16.3/20.7	2024	26.1/30.6
6	Bethesda Avenue	Arlington Road	NA ¹	2019	35.3/35.4	2022	47.1/50.5	2024	45.2/ 63.6
7	Leland Street	Wisconsin Avenue	NA ¹	2019	13.7/9.0	2022	10.4/9.7	2024	20.4/12.2
8	Wilson Lane	Old Georgetown Road	NA ¹	2019	34.4/39.7	2022	42.7/53.8	2024	49.5/56.1
9	East-West Highway	Connecticut Avenue	NA ¹	2019	78.1/62.5	2022	50.6/50.4	2024	59.6/51.2
10	Bradley Lane	Connecticut Avenue	80	2019	32.0/113.9	2022	44.3/69.0	2024	30.0/52.6
11	West Cedar Lane	Old Georgetown Road	80	2019	28.3/29.6	2022	31.2/34.1	2024	38.7/29.7
12	Cedar Lane	Rockville Pike	NA ¹	2019	50.4/59.5	2022	55.6/59.0	2024	59.0/64.8
13	Jones Bridge Road	Rockville Pike	NA ¹	2019	162.2/70.3	2022	45.2/64.7	2024	42.4/70.5
14	Huntington Parkway	Bradley Boulevard	80	2019	30.1/51.1	2022	16.2/20.1	2024	18.6/26.2
15	Little Falls Parkway ²	Arlington Road	80	-	-	-	-	2024	16.9/19.7
16	Little Falls Parkway ²	Hillandale Road	80	-	-	-	-	2024	9.7/9.6

Intersections within the Sector Plan Boundary

Intersection exceeds the delay threshold

¹ Intersections were evaluated for adequacy based on a delay standard of 120 seconds/vehicle prior to 2022, however following the 2024-2028 GIP this delay standard no longer applies for red policy areas where these intersections are located.

² Analysis of Little Falls Parkway/Arlington Road and Little Falls Parkway/Hillandale Road were not conducted prior to 2024.

TRAFFIC QUEUING ANALYSIS

To supplement the intersection average vehicle delay analysis described above, a traffic queuing analysis was performed at the eight intersections within the Plan Area. The results of the analysis are reported in Table 2. The highlighted cells in the table indicate the travel lane movement that is projected to have vehicle queues that exceed the existing storage/turn lanes length. Two different queuing results are reported — Synchro 95th Percentile Queues and SimTraffic Maximum Queues:

- **Synchro 95th Percentile Queues** — 95th percentile queue length that is projected to occur within the peak hour based on statistical models that reflect the queuing impacts of the individual intersection and its coordinated intersections.
- **SimTraffic Maximum Queues** — Maximum queue length that is projected to occur within the peak hour, based on a traffic simulation that reflects the full impact queuing of the entire network.

The queuing analysis shows that seven of the eight intersections evaluated are projected to have vehicle queue lengths on at least one approach during the peak hour that exceed the existing storage/turn lane lengths and may spillback into the adjacent lanes:

- Bradley Lane at Wisconsin Avenue
- Bradley Boulevard at Wisconsin Avenue
- East-West Highway at Wisconsin Avenue/Old Georgetown Road
- Montgomery Avenue at Wisconsin Avenue
- Bethesda Avenue at Arlington Road
- Leland Street at Wisconsin Avenue
- Wilson Lane at Old Georgetown Road

Table 2: Queuing Analysis

	Intersection	Approach	Move-ment	AM Peak		PM Peak		Existing Storage (ft)
				Synchro 95th Percentile Queues (ft)	SimTraffic Max Queues (ft)	Synchro 95th Percentile Queues (ft)	SimTraffic Max Queues (ft)	
1	Battery Lane at Wisconsin Avenue	Eastbound	EBL	196	183	157	211	-
			EBLTR	240	244	247	252	-
		Westbound	WBLT	84	122	96	131	-
			WBR	0	94	0	76	80
		Northbound	NBLTR	236	266	#657	329	-
		Southbound	SBTR	350	295	223	188	-
2	Elm Street at Wisconsin Avenue	Westbound	WBL	53	125	71	144	-
			WBR	66	70	117	96	-
		Northbound	NBT	301	268	101	127	-
		Southbound	SBT	117	145	0	45	-
3	Bradley Boulevard at Wisconsin Avenue	Eastbound	EBL	143	239	#172	249	-
			EBT	194	467	340	413	-
			EBR	404	225	269	225	200
		Westbound	WBL	114	150	85	150	125
			WBTR	408	566	#475	922	-
		Northbound	NBL	#250	205	#427	215	190
			NBTR	192	210	364	477	-
		Southbound	SBL	49	154	0	154	130
SBTR	#423		385	337	537	-		
4	East-West Highway at Wisconsin Avenue/Old Georgetown Road	Westbound	WBL	207	236	195	259	350
			WBT	231	243	297	317	-
			WBR	98	143	199	206	350
		Northbound	NBL	m145	124	m359	125	100
			NBLT	102	218	m331	298	-
		Southbound	SBT	108	144	247	245	-
5	Montgomery Avenue at Wisconsin Avenue	Eastbound	EBLT	284	269	#383	296	-
			EBR	249	232	122	118	-
		Northbound	NBT	234	184	269	271	-
			NBR	257	164	198	175	150
		Southbound	SBL	115	140	114	140	115
SBT	267	291	123	208	-			
6	Bethesda Avenue at Arlington Road	Eastbound	EBLT	154	166	#135	196	-
			EBR	54	112	84	123	100
		Westbound	WBL	70	107	190	218	-
			WBTR	119	135	212	230	-
		Northbound	NBLTR	452	294	#603	324	-
		Southbound	SBL	63	100	77	100	75
SBTR	337		296	422	347	-		

Table 2 (con't): Queuing Analysis

	Intersection	Approach	Move-ment	AM Peak		PM Peak		Existing Storage (ft)
				Synchro 95th Percentile Queues (ft)	SimTraffic Max Queues (ft)	Synchro 95th Percentile Queues (ft)	SimTraffic Max Queues (ft)	
7	Leland Street at Wisconsin Avenue	Eastbound	EBL	#265	115	96	112	90
			EBT	115	313	128	178	-
			EBR	164	186	187	231	-
		Westbound	WBLT	84	112	159	200	-
			WBR	44	61	75	101	-
		Northbound	NBL	m26	134	m53	128	110
			NBTR	221	220	43	97	-
		Southbound	SBL	63	68	6	54	115
SBTR	247		132	45	85	-		
8	Wilson Lane at Old Georgetown Road	Eastbound	EBR	#238	291	175	183	130
		Northbound	NBL	131	137	#335	175	150
			NBTR	130	125	244	286	-
		Southbound	SBT	335	887	203	919	-
			SBR	#497	265	#444	265	240
		Northeast-bound	NEBL	175	232	#413	429	-
			NEBTR	174	204	#336	225	-
		Southwest-bound	SWBLT	222	268	186	251	-
SWBR	60		79	163	189	-		

Legend

The travel lane movement that is projected to have vehicle queues that exceed the existing storage/turn lanes length

#: The 95th percentile volume exceeds capacity, queue may be longer

m: Volume for 95th percentile queue is metered by upstream signal

EBL: Eastbound Left

EBLTR: Eastbound Left, Through & Right

WBLT: Westbound Left & Through

WBR: Westbound Right

NBLTR: Northbound Left, Through & Right

WBL: Westbound Left

WBR: Westbound Right

NBT: Northbound Through

SBT: Southbound Through

EBT: Eastbound Through

EBR: Eastbound Right

WBTR: Westbound Through & Right

NBL: Northbound Left

NBTR: Northbound Through & Right

SBL: Southbound Left

SBTR: Southbound Through & Right

NEBL: Northeastbound Left

NEBTR: Northeastbound Through & Right

SWBLT: Southwestbound Left & Through

SWBR: Southwestbound Right

SECTION 3: PARKS

OVERVIEW

The *Bethesda Downtown Plan* recommends new and enhanced parks and open spaces in downtown Bethesda, including new civic greens at Veteran’s Park, Montgomery Farm Women’s Cooperative Market, and the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT), and new urban parks, neighborhood greens, pathways and gateways to major trail systems.

The overarching parks and open space goals of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan are to:

- Support the centers with civic gathering spaces.
- Provide linkages and signature gateways to the major trail systems.
- Create livable communities and appropriate transitions by greening and buffering the edges.
- Create green neighborhood parks.
- Add to the existing park, trail, and open space system.

PROGRESS

Since the last Annual Monitoring Report in the summer of 2023 the following progress has been made towards achieving the parks and open space goals of the Plan with major projects moving into new stages of development:

Park Projects: Caroline Freeland Urban Park was completely renovated and re-opened in November 2024 with a new playground, central lawn, seating areas, landscaping and stormwater management improvements. Elm Street Urban Park’s design is underway to accommodate the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) Surface Route and provide enhancements to the north end of the park. Improvements are anticipated to be completed when the Purple Line adjacent section of the CCT opens. The Parks Department is part of a multi-party public-private partnership working to redevelop Parking Lots 10 & 24 into a new mixed-use development with a renovated and improved Farm Women’s Market and new parks serving as the Eastern Greenway south of Elm Street Urban Park along 46th Street.

Park Acquisitions: Two properties have been acquired as part of the proposed Eastern Capital Crescent Urban Greenway along Montgomery Avenue and planning for interim park uses, potentially including a temporary dog park, is underway. The Parks Department is working to demolish the existing buildings and hopes to have interim uses in place for the public to access later in 2025.



Figure 3: Sector Plan Recommended Parks and Open Space

Development Approvals: The redevelopment of 4702 Chevy Chase Drive will provide a connection from Chevy Chase Drive to Nottingham Drive which will improve connectivity to Norwood Local Park. The PLD Lot 25 Redevelopment will provide the anchor portion of the north end of the Eastern

Greenway between Maple Avenue and Highland Avenue; and the PLD Lot 44 & 4702 West Virginia Ave redevelopment will provide the portion of the Eastern Greenway connecting Chase Avenue Urban Park to West Virginia Avenue along with improvements to Chase Avenue Urban Park.

Park Impact Payments: Between August 2023 and November 2024, the Parks Department received PIPs from three projects; 7340 Wisconsin Avenue (\$1,197,958), 4725 Cheltenham Drive (\$189,406 and an additional non-PIP contribution of \$25,000 for improvements in Cheltenham Urban Park), and 4915 Auburn Avenue (\$652,800) totaling \$2,040,164.72. Two new PIPs were also approved for the following projects: 4702 Chevy Chase Drive (\$635,903.37) and 7126 Wisconsin Avenue (\$2,899,740.85).

Additional information on the status of the parks and open space recommendations in the Bethesda Downtown Plan can be found in the Parks and Open Space section⁴ of the Implementation Monitoring webpage for the Plan.

SECTION 4: SCHOOLS

As a process of monitoring the adequacy of school facilities in relation to the *Bethesda Downtown Plan*, this report reviews the latest enrollment and capacity data of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) Cluster collectively at each school level. For the 2024 Monitoring Report, the actual enrollment and capacity reported for the 2023-2024 school year and projections for six years later (2029-2030)⁵ are analyzed. The projections for the cluster's middle schools and high school, however, are subject to change following the results of the Charles W. Woodward High School reopening boundary study.

REVIEW OF 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR ENROLLMENT AND SIX-YEAR PROJECTION

In the 2023-2024 school year, the cluster saw a decline in its total enrollment compared to the previous year. At the elementary school level, enrollment dropped by 89 students, a 2.6% decrease, while the middle schools saw a nominal increase of 8 students, a 0.5% growth rate, and the high school saw an increase of 33 students, a 1.4% growth rate. As a result, the cluster-wide utilization rate of elementary schools decreased to 81.1%. The cluster-wide middle school utilization rate also decreased to 82.4%, mostly due to a collective increase in the program capacity. The high school's utilization rate on the other hand increased to 95.7%.

MCPS projects that the elementary school enrollment will partially rebound by 2029, bringing the cluster-wide utilization rate to 84.7%. The middle school and high school enrollments are expected to remain at a similar level throughout the next six years, keeping the cluster's utilization rates for each level at 81.2% and 94.6% respectively.

⁴ [Bethesda Implementation Monitoring – Parks and Open Space - Montgomery Planning](#)

⁵ Provided by MCPS in the FY 2025 Educational Facilities Master Plan and the FY 2025-2030 Capital Improvements Program

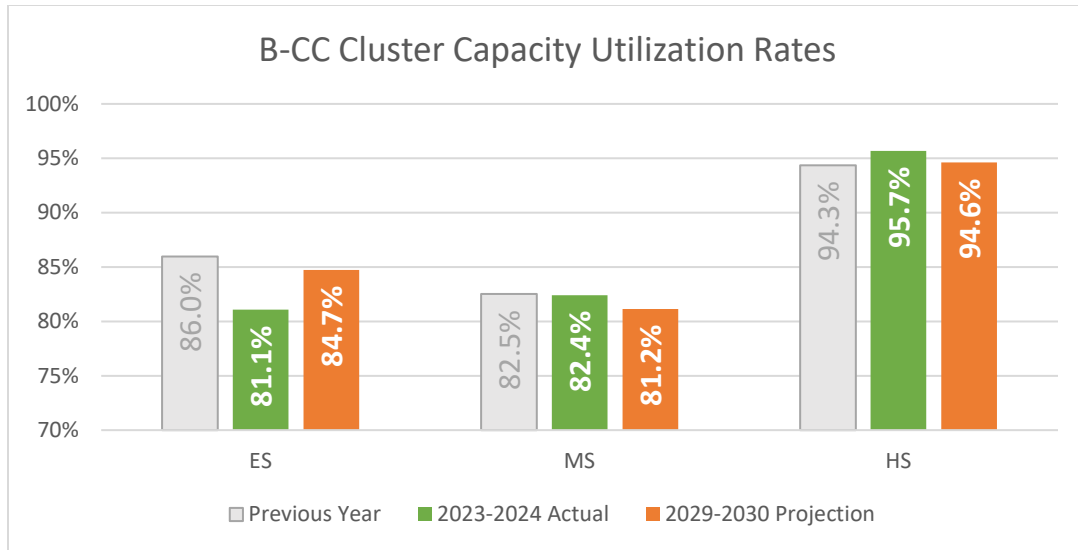


Figure 3: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster Capacity Utilization Rates

SHIFTING TREND: ENROLLMENT DECLINE LEADS TO ABUNDANCE OF SURPLUS CAPACITY

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster experienced a strong wave of enrollment growth that started at the elementary school level around 2008 and subsequently progressed through the middle school and high school levels. In response to the overcrowding that was occurring in many of the schools, the cluster was able to receive significant capital investment throughout the past fifteen years. As a result, the cluster’s total capacity increased by more than 1,400 seats at the elementary school level, more than 1,000 seats at the middle school level, and more than 750 seats at the high school level.

The enrollment for elementary school students peaked in 2016, and even with the additional students coming from new development in the Plan Area, the cluster’s total number of elementary school students has since declined by 15%. As a result, the cluster now has a considerable amount of surplus capacity available. However, Bethesda Elementary School is starting to see a seat deficit again despite a recent boundary change. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the overall enrollment trend of the broader area, especially given the cluster-wide and countywide decline in elementary school enrollment. In the 2023-2024 school year, the cluster’s total surplus of elementary school capacity exceeded 750 seats, which is more than the number of students enrolled at Bethesda Elementary School or any of the cluster’s feeder elementary schools. Projections indicate that there will still be over 600 surplus seats cluster-wide in the 2029-2030 school year. Enrollment in the middle schools also peaked in 2019 and the amount of surplus capacity, which was approximately 350 seats in the 2023-2024 school year, is expected to increase throughout the next few years. High school enrollment has continued to grow steadily since 2014. However, projections indicate that the rate of growth is slowing down and expected to plateau, especially considering that the elementary and middle school

enrollments have already peaked. There were more than 100 surplus high school seats in the 2023-2024 school year, and that number is expected to increase.

The following table shows the capacity, enrollment, and surplus capacity available at each individual school and the cluster-wide total for each school level for the 2023-2024 school year and the 2029-2030 school year projections.

Table 3: Surplus Capacity of Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster and Feeder Schools

	2023-2024 Capacity	2023-2024 Enrollment	2023-2024 Surplus Capacity	2029-2030 Capacity	2029-2030 Enrollment	2029-2030 Surplus Capacity
Bethesda-Chevy Chase HS	2475	2368	107	2475	2342	133
Cluster Total - MS	1979	1631	348	1979	1606	373
Silver Creek MS	915	766	149	915	736	179
Westland MS	1064	865	199	1064	870	194
Cluster Total - ES	4036	3272	764	4036	3420	616
Bethesda ES	561	584	-23	561	584	-23
Chevy Chase ES	483	427	56	483	476	7
North Chevy Chase ES	374	243	131	374	237	137
Rock Creek Forest ES	771	669	102	771	678	93
Rosemary Hills ES	650	533	117	650	551	99
Somerset ES	549	303	246	549	369	180
Westbrook ES	648	513	135	648	525	123

During the Bethesda Downtown Plan development stage, a build-out enrollment estimate of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster was calculated under a hypothetical scenario in which the residential capacities allowed in all recently adopted plan areas would be built out to their maximums. This estimate included impacts of the Bethesda Downtown Plan, the Greater Lyttonsville Plan, Chevy Chase Lake, Friendship Heights Master Plan, and Westbard Sector Plans, and assumed that the enrollment from existing residential areas will remain stable throughout the life of the Plan. However, the cluster’s declining enrollment has invalidated that assumption, undermining the approach of using max build-out enrollment estimates to gauge the long-term adequacy of school capacity. For example, when the build-out enrollment estimate was calculated in 2018, the cluster’s total elementary school enrollment was projected to be 3,690 students for the 2023-2024 school year. The actual enrollment that was reported in the 2023-2024 school year however was only 3,272 students,

418 students less than what was projected. This is in spite of development and approvals in the Bethesda Overlay Zone reaching the 30.4 million square feet threshold in September 2023.

SCHEDULED CAPITAL PROJECTS AND SOLUTIONS IMPACTING THE CLUSTER

On March 28, 2023, the Board of Education decided on the scope of a boundary study to establish the service area for the reopening of Charles W. Woodward High School. The scope includes the high school and middle schools serving the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster, in addition to those serving the Downcounty Consortium, Walter Johnson, and Walt Whitman clusters. The scope, however, does not include any of the elementary schools.

Once Woodward High School reopens with its new facility on 11211 Old Georgetown Road, which is currently scheduled for the 2027-2028 school year, a student reassignment process will start taking effect. This will likely alter the enrollment and utilization projections of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster high school and middle schools. The current enrollment projections, however, do not reflect any of this potential change – the boundary study options have not been developed and the extent of each option’s impact on the cluster is yet unknown. MCPS’s projections will typically start reflecting any change to boundaries once the decisions are made by the Board of Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The enrollment trends of the schools that serve the Bethesda Downtown Plan Area should continue to be monitored as recommended by the Sector Plan. However, given the increasing amount of surplus capacity becoming available within the cluster and across the County, if an individual school, e.g. Bethesda Elementary School, is projected to reach a level of overutilization that warrants relief, reassigning students to adjacent schools with surplus capacity available should be considered.

SECTION 4: IAC COORDINATION

The Annual Monitoring Report was presented to the Bethesda Implementation Advisory Committee on January 6, 2025. The Committee provided comments which are included as Attachment A.

Bethesda Downtown Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) comments on the 2024 Bethesda Downtown Annual Monitoring Report

General comments:

The regularly updated information on the website about implementation of the Bethesda Downtown Plan (the Plan) is appropriate and informative. However we believe a more comprehensive and straightforward annual report, one that addresses issues of concern (e.g., building a recreation center, park creation) in addition to points of progress, (e.g., status of development projects, PIP funds, increase in housing units, etc.) would be more useful to the community and those not intimately involved with the IAC. The report should address achievements and issues of concern. In our opinion, the draft report selectively presents information in an overly positive light.

Transportation. It is not clear what the data presented in the report is intended to tell us. A quick review of the data for the intersections in the Plan area reveals that all except two have gotten worse since 2022. However, it is not clear what “worse” means and whether there are any potential remedies.

Bike Lane Utilization: If there is data collected on utilization, it should be included in the report.

Sidewalk and Street Closures. The report would benefit from a more extensive discussion of pedestrian challenges, including short and long-term sidewalk closures. A list of the sidewalks and streets that are closed and their anticipated duration should be included to show the impacts of development on pedestrians and businesses. A table with lane closures and street closures should also be included.

Loading and Unloading: The study that was done resulted in some recommendations for ameliorating the problems. Please add information to the report about what steps will be taken to implement the ideas in the coming year or two, both generally, and perhaps in relation to an ongoing or anticipated development project(s)..

Parks: Creation of new parkland is a primary goal of the Bethesda Downtown Plan, where thirteen parks were proposed.. To acknowledge the importance of park development in the Plan, the annual monitoring report should include a table that lists all 13 parks and shows the status of their implementation, updated annually

Add more information about the Farm Women's Market redevelopment to this report, notably when it is expected to begin development and/or what steps it needs to take before development can begin. Information about progress made on the design of the park and funding sources should be included.

Notably, there is no mention about Veteran's Park and the Union Hardware property. The Minor Master Plan Amendment includes a recommendation regarding location of

the Veteran's Park expansion, and this should be mentioned. This is the sort of information that should be included in a Parks table.

If Caroline Freeland and the new plan for redesign of Elm Street Park (for the CCT surface trail) are to be cited in this report, then it should be noted that neither of these parks is new and that the work done in them was not mentioned in the Plan -- they have nothing to do with implementation of the Plan.

Development Approvals: Given the importance of providing more housing in the County and keeping a focus on new development in Bethesda, the annual monitoring report should include an annual synopsis of the projects that have been proposed and approved (sketch, preliminary, and site plan) in the reporting year, detailing name of project, location, construction timing, number of housing units, amount of MPDUs, PIP contribution, etc. A table should be included that has the same information for prior years with the project status updated as necessary (information about whether they have obtained extensions, have applied for permits, are under construction, are completed, are not moving). This would give the IAC and the public a snapshot of what development is presently underway and what could be in the near term.

The proposed project at 4702 Chevy Chase Drive was mentioned in the report, but without pertinent details. Please add that the project has not pulled any permits and instead has gotten an extension; that the community meeting was in 2020, and that connectivity with Norwood Park is years in the future.

Park Impact Payment The PIP is an important part of the Plan and a table showing how much PIP money has been approved to date and in 2024, how much has been collected to date and in 2024, how much has been spent and on what and how much is left should be included -- not just an accounting of the amounts collected and approved in 2024. The number of projects that have contributed to the PIP or have been approved to use BOZ density and will be contributing to the PIP is not very long so a PIP table in the report could include each of them and indicate which have paid the PIP and which have not yet paid.

The status of the PIP funds tied up in the old Union Hardware site should be mentioned in this section.

Schools. The presentation on schools is overly positive and as regards elementary schools, misleading. The section "SHIFTING TREND: ENROLLMENT DECLINE LEADS TO ABUNDANCE OF SURPLUS" with its focus on cluster numbers, ignores the overcrowding that is happening at Bethesda Elementary School. This section title needs to be toned down and information about overcrowding at Bethesda Elementary School needs to be fully addressed in this report. There was overcrowding for the 2023-24 school year (the year presented in this report) but it appears that it is worse for the 2024-25 school year because on December 16, 2024, Superintendent Thomas Taylor sent an email message to the parents of Bethesda Elementary students to inform them that overcrowding at the school requires immediate remedial action. However, the only

relief that can be offered for this school year is to transfer students to Somerset Elementary School at the end of the second marking period. He wrote:

“As a short-term solution, we are offering families the option of a Change of School Assignment (COSA) to transfer their child to either Somerset Elementary School, Westbrook Elementary School or Chevy Chase Elementary School. This option is available on a first-come, first-served basis until available space at Somerset and Westbrook Elementary schools is full. This option is available for interested families until the end of the 2nd marking period and transfer would occur at the marking period.”

However, parents who decide to move their children will not be offered transportation. This needs to be added to the report.

Also, the Friendship Heights master plan needs to be added to the list of plans at the bottom of page 14 (the discussion about build-out enrollment estimates) because students from Friendship Heights attend B-CC cluster middle and high schools. Note, it should be mentioned that a new Friendship Heights master plan is being written.

Final comment

The IAC believes that a transparent data-rich report, as described herein, could be used as a template for future reports. And after the first issue of the report, it would not be onerous to produce because the data could be easily inserted from more regularly updated data in tables on the website, and the narrative would flow from those.