

## County Council Testimony of Jane Fairweather Bethesda Arts and Entertainment Board Bethesda Minor Master Plan Amendment February 26, 2025

Good evening, I am Jane Fairweather speaking on behalf of the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment Board, which has an impressive track record for promoting and implementing public art in the Bethesda downtown area. The State of Maryland has designated downtown Bethesda as an Arts and Entertainment (A&E) District, which is managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP). In coordination with BUP, the A&E Board fundraises, as a not-for-profit organization, and champions a diverse number of arts and entertainment projects in the district. We attach to this testimony more information on the A&E Board and its work within the District.

The A&E Board is here in strong support of the current version of the Bethesda Minor Master Plan Amendment that would allow incentive density payments for public art to be made to the A&E Board and other responsible civic organizations as part of the anticipated Bethesda Overlay Zone update or the Incentive Zoning Update (IZU). The specific language provides the following at page 26:

To provide greater flexibility to promote payments for public art projects in downtown Bethesda, the MMPA recommends updating the BOZ to allow fee payments to also be accepted by BUP, the Bethesda A&E District, or other civic arts organization accepted by the Planning Board.

This opportunity would encourage more art in the County by facilitating Tier 1 payments for art or placemaking to a capable party who could then implement responsive projects in the vicinity of the subject development. The A&E Board, among others, is poised to receive such funds and utilize them for the betterment of County residents. We hope that the opportunity will remain in the Council's final version of the Bethesda Minor Master Plan Amendment and any subsequent incentive density updates to either the Overlay Zone or the IZU.

Up to this point, the A&E Board has worked cooperatively with Planning Staff to expand the public art incentive density benefit opportunity in Bethesda and look forward to working with the Council to ensure it becomes a reality. Thank you very much for your consideration and support of these comments.



DISTRICT

**ENTERTAINMENT** 



Managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.



## Background on the Bethesda A&E District

- Downtown Bethesda was officially designated as an Arts & Entertainment District by the state of Maryland starting July 1, 2002. This designation provides state and county tax incentives that support artists, arts organizations, and developers within the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District.
- In July 2022, downtown Bethesda received its third re-designation to further advance its mission of promoting the arts in the area.
- The Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District curates top-tier arts, cultural events and programs that enrich the lives of residents, businesses, and visitors, while fostering community growth and vitality. The A&E events showcase the talents of local artists, writers, filmmakers and performers, offering them platforms to present their work to the community.







### **A&E Board Members**

### Executive Committee

**President**: Jane Fairweather, Jane Fairweather Team/Long & Foster

Vice President: Jad Donohoe, The Donohoe Companies
Secretary/Treasurer: Patrick O'Neil, Lerch, Early & Brewer

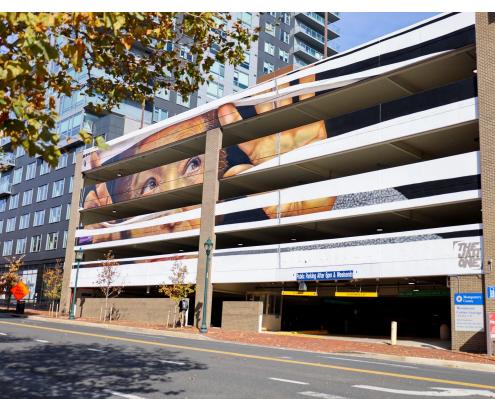
### Board Members

Arlene Begelman, Local Resident
Bonnie Fogel, Imagination Stage
Richard Greenberg, Greenhill Companies
Bob Hebda, Local Resident
Amy Kaslow, Amy Kaslow Gallery
Zachary Oxman, Artist and Local Artist
Robin Sherman, Local Resident
Wendy Susswein, Local Resident
Peter Fosselman (Non-voting), Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services
Center









# Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District

### **Special Events Include**

- Bethesda Film Fest
- Bethesda Fine Arts Festival
- Bethesda Art Walk & Art Openings
- Play in a Day

### **Initiatives Include**

- "Paint the Town" Public Mural Program
- Signal Box Public Art
- Gallery B
- Studio B
- Triangle Art Studios
- The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards
- Bethesda Painting Awards





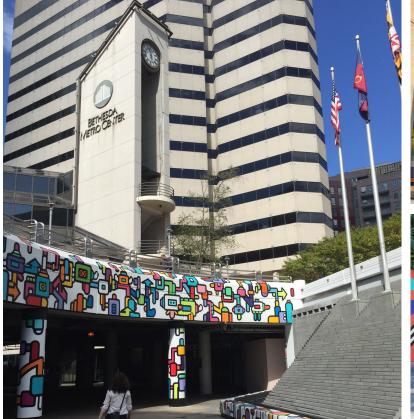


### Signal Boxes Public Art Project

- 250 artists applied for consideration
- 15 artists were selected; their original artwork was printed on vinyl wraps to cover Signal Boxes in downtown Bethesda.
- 15 private sponsors supported the project
- Completed November 2024













### Public Art Murals & Projects Completed from 2012-2022

\*\* All projects completed with the support of private and public partners. \*\*

# Next A&E projects that need financial support

### Arlington Road/Bethesda Avenue Intersection Mural

• Cost estimate: \$50,000

### Bradley Boulevard Pedestrian Bridge

• Cost estimate: \$150,000+





### For more information

Please visit www.bethesda.org

#### **Contact:**

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