



**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.



Bethesda

ARTS &
ENTERTAINMENT
DISTRICT

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:

Jane Fairweather, Chair, Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District, jane@janefairweather.com

Patrick O'Neil, Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District
ploneil@lercheearly.com

Jeff Burton, Executive Director, Bethesda Urban Partnership, jburton@bethesda.org

Stephanie Coppula, Bethesda Urban Partnership
scoppula@bethesda.org

