



BY EMAIL

June 10, 2025

President Kate Stewart and Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

**Re: Support for ZTA 25-05
Art and Placemaking
Bethesda Arts and Entertainment Board**

Dear President Stewart and Members of the Montgomery County Council,

On behalf of the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment Board (the "A&E Board"), we write in strong support of the "Art and Placemaking" component of Zoning Text Amendment 25-05 (the "ZTA"), which seeks to update the public benefit system in the Commercial/Residential and Employment zones. As you may be aware, the State of Maryland designated downtown Bethesda as an Arts and Entertainment District, which is managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership. The A&E Board was formed as a result of the 501(c)(3) status that was granted to the District. 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. Attached is more information on the A&E Board and its work within the District.

Section 4.7.3.B.a (starting at Line 1156) of the ZTA expands the public art incentive density benefit opportunity to allow A&E and other responsible art stewards to receive public benefit funds to implement and maintain public art. The specific ZTA language is as follows:

a. Art and Placemaking

A development application that installs public art, provides accessible programming in open spaces, or promotes the arts through providing affordable housing, workspaces, and gallery space for the arts and theater is eligible for incentive density. Contributions for art or placemaking may be received by the Public Arts Trust Steering (PATSC), an urban district, a business improvement district, an arts and entertainment district, or a Regional Services Center. (emphasis added)

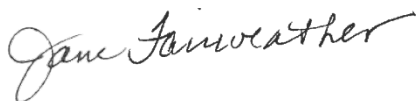
We note that this public arts funding mechanism to allow incentive density payments for public art to be made to the A&E Board and other appropriate civic organizations was included as a recommendation in the recently adopted Bethesda Minor Master Plan Amendment (“BMMA”). The specific language provides the following at page 25:

To provide greater flexibility to promote payments for public art projects in downtown Bethesda, the MMPA recommends updating the [Bethesda Overlay Zone] 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

The ZTA appropriately fulfills the BMMA’s recommendation but on a Countywide scale. If the ZTA is adopted, County residents will benefit when Tier 1 payments for art or placemaking are made to a capable party who could then implement responsive projects in the vicinity of the subject development. Everyone will gain from the opportunity of more and potentially grander art initiatives in their neighborhoods. 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 ZTA’s final version and any subsequent incentive density updates to the Bethesda Overlay Zone.

Up to this point, the A&E Board has worked cooperatively with Planning and Council Staff to expand the public art incentive density benefit opportunity in Bethesda and looks forward to working with the Council to ensure it becomes a reality within the entire County. We appreciate the County Council’s consideration of this important matter and look forward to further discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Fairweather".

Jane Fairweather
Chair
Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District



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*

Geoff Sharpe, *Federal Realty Investment Trust*

Jan Shatz, *Artist and Local Resident*

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

