



# **2018 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.**

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# 2018 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership

## Executive Summary

December 11, 2018

The County Council established the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) in 1993 as the urban district corporation for the Bethesda Urban District. By law, an urban district corporation exists for five years before it must be reauthorized by Council resolution and approved by the County Executive. Before its term is renewed, the Office of Legislative Oversight must conduct a performance evaluation.

BUP's current term ends on January 31, 2019. Since this evaluation finds that BUP continues to fulfill its mandated responsibilities, OLO recommends that the Council reauthorize BUP for an additional five-year term.

## BUP's Organizational Structure and Responsibilities

A Board of Directors, consisting of 11 members appointed by the County Executive and approved by the Council, oversees the Bethesda Urban Partnership. BUP has 33 full-time staff members in four divisions: internal operations, field operations, marketing, and transportation management.

By law, "urban districts are created to provide public services and facilities that are: (1) primarily of benefit to the property and persons within the urban district, rather than to the County as a whole; and (2) in addition to services and facilities that the County provides generally" (County Code Chapter 68A). Listed below are BUP's legally authorized responsibilities and the contracted services it provides.

Responsibility	Examples
<b>Maintaining and enhancing streetscape amenities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintenance and landscaping (including trash/recycling collection, tree maintenance, snow removal, and street sweeping) of Bethesda public rights-of-way, public parking structures, and highway medians</li><li>• Maintenance of pedestrian tunnel next to the Bethesda Metro Station</li><li>• Street sweeping in Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts</li></ul>
<b>Programming public interest activities, including Promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintenance of website, conducting media outreach and publishing written advertising materials</li><li>• Organization of special promotional events such as Taste of Bethesda, Imagination Bethesda, and Winter Wonderland</li><li>• Promotion and management of cultural activities and events such as Gallery B, Studio B, and dance festivals</li></ul>
<b>Advancing the business and residential environment and sense of community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing assistance to Bethesda visitors through the Ask Me Team</li><li>• Communicating with appropriate agencies about emergency maintenance, safety, or cleanliness issues</li><li>• Participation in the Bethesda Metro Improvement Task Force</li></ul>
<b>Enhancing safety and security in public areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaboration with County Police and Fire/Rescue Service to improve safety and security</li><li>• Serving as the alternative command center for the Bethesda police station in an emergency</li></ul>
<b>Providing specialized transportation services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Management of the free downtown Bethesda Circulator</li></ul>
<b>Increasing the number of people using alternative modes of transportation for commuting to Bethesda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assistance with the development of traffic mitigation plans for employers</li><li>• Marketing of alternative transportation options such as public transit, carpools, and vanpools to employers and employees in downtown Bethesda</li><li>• Completion of an annual survey of employees to monitor changes in transportation use</li></ul>

## Bethesda Urban Partnership's Finances

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BUP receives revenue from a combination of County and non-County sources. From FY14–FY18, 94% of BUP's revenue came from the County Government, with a further 6% coming from non-County sources. Over this period, BUP's County revenue increased by 13% and non-County revenue increased by 20%. BUP's revenues and expenditures for the FY14–FY18 period are shown in the table on the next page.

BUP's County revenue comes from four service contracts managed by three different County offices. Specifically, BUP provides:

- **Urban district management services**, including maintenance and landscaping, promoting downtown Bethesda, planning special events, and managing the Bethesda Circulator, under a contract managed by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center. This contract provides BUP's largest single source of revenue.
- **Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD) services**, including promoting alternate modes of transportation and conducting an annual commuter survey of employees within the Bethesda TMD under a contract managed by the Department of Transportation (DOT).
- **Groundskeeping services** at public parking lots and garages in Bethesda under another contract managed by the Department of Transportation.
- **Street sweeping services** in the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts under one contract with the County to provide street sweeping services in both urban districts.

BUP's non-County revenue comes from event income and sponsorships, advertising on the Bethesda Circulator, and service contracts with other entities (such as the State Highway Administration and Imagination Stage). BUP uses this revenue to enhance its existing services and maintain an equipment replacement reserve fund.

BUP utilizes six expenditure categories: (1) field operations (such as maintenance), (2) marketing and special events, (3) transportation management, (4) internal operations, (5) arts & entertainment; and (6) an equipment replacement reserve fund. BUP's expenditures increased from approximately \$4.5 million in FY14 to \$5.0 million in FY18; its revenues increased from approximately \$4.5 million in FY14 to \$5.2 million in FY18. As shown on the next page, BUP's revenues exceeded its expenditures each year from FY14–FY18.

### Bethesda Urban Partnership Revenues and Expenditures, FY14 – FY18

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
<b>Revenues (\$000s)</b>					
County Contracts	\$4,222	\$4,357	\$4,502	\$4,773	\$4,787
Bethesda Urban District	3,474	3,607	3,760	3,983	3,998
Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD)	561	563	552	587	597
Streetsweeping in Wheaton and Silver Spring	44	44	48	49	49
Trash Removal in Wheaton and Silver Spring	118	117	118	118	118
Groundskeeping at Public Parking Lots, Garages	25	26	25	36	25
<b>Non-County Revenue</b>	<b>\$305</b>	<b>\$297</b>	<b>\$226</b>	<b>\$340</b>	<b>\$367</b>
<b>Total BUP Revenue</b>	<b>\$4,527</b>	<b>\$4,654</b>	<b>\$4,729</b>	<b>\$5,113</b>	<b>\$5,154</b>
<b>Expenditures (\$000s)</b>					
Field Operations	2,452	2,547	2,621	2,787	2,843
Marketing and Special Events	765	806	763	858	797
Transportation Management	562	580	564	542	568
Internal Operations	518	557	581	648	601
Arts & Entertainment District	155	142	134	136	147
Reserve for Equipment Replacements	50	50	50	50	50
<b>Total BUP Expenditures</b>	<b>\$4,502</b>	<b>\$4,681</b>	<b>\$4,713</b>	<b>\$5,021</b>	<b>\$5,005</b>

#### County Funding Sources for BUP's Contracts

BUP's County Government contracts are funded through three primary sources of revenue:

**Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund.** The Bethesda PLD Fund receives revenue from three sources: (1) a property tax on commercial and non-commercial property in the PLD, (2) parking fees and fines collected within the PLD; and (3) investment income. By law, these funds may be used to operate, construct, and renovate parking facilities and to fund Urban District and transportation management activities in Bethesda. In 2015, the County Executive and Council made a set of structural changes to strengthen the fiscal sustainability of this funding arrangement, which reduced the PLD Fund transfers to each Urban District and reinstated transfers from the County General Fund (described below) to help offset the reduced PLD transfer amount. In FY18, the County transferred approximately \$1.5 million from the Bethesda PLD Fund to the Bethesda Urban District, compared with \$2.9 million in FY14.

**Bethesda Urban District Fund.** The Bethesda Urban District Fund receives revenue from an urban district tax on real and personal property and from maintenance charges paid by optional method developers. Combined revenues from these sources grew from \$628,346 in FY14 to \$876,049 in FY18.

**General Fund Transfers.** In FY06, the Council eliminated the General Fund transfer to the Bethesda Urban District, replacing it with funds transferred from the Bethesda PLD Fund. In FY16, following County Council and Executive actions to limit annual transfers from the Bethesda PLD fund, the Council reinstated these General Fund transfers, and its FY16 budget approved a transfer of \$650,318 to the Bethesda Urban District each year from FY16–FY18.

## **Bethesda Urban Partnership's 2019–2024 Strategic Plan**

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BUP's Board of Directors recently completed a new strategic plan for the years 2019–2024 that includes goals in the areas of promotion, beautification, arts & entertainment, and mobility. BUP included strategic goals for each of these areas in its next five-year term, including:

- Develop a clearly-defined Bethesda Brand and a marketing plan to promote its benefits regionally and globally;
- Beautify the Bethesda area through new public art and improved urban spaces, improved branding and wayfinding, and updated streetscape guidelines;
- Promote economic development through more arts- and entertainment-related attractions and increased fundraising potential through the A&E District's non-profit charitable status; and
- Work with MCDOT on a new five-year capital improvement plan to upgrade streetscape infrastructure, with special attention paid to increased pedestrian safety.

## **Office of Legislative Oversight Recommendations**

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OLO's report includes the following recommendations for Council action on the Bethesda Urban Partnership:

### **#1. Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for an additional five-year term and retain the requirement for an OLO evaluation prior to the next reauthorization.**

OLO's review of BUP confirmed that their activities continue to fulfill the purposes of the organization. OLO also found that BUP's partners in County Government and the Bethesda community are satisfied with the quality of BUP's work.

### **#2. Require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before their next reauthorization.**

OLO recommends that the Council require BUP to continue to seek input from its service recipients as it begins its strategic planning process. In addition, the Council should require BUP to include a status report on its implementation of objectives outlined in the previous strategic plan.

# OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT REPORT 2018-12

## 2018 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership

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## **Chapter I. Authority, Scope, and Authorization of Report**

### **A. Authority, Scope, and Authorization**

Council Resolution [18-882](#), *Fiscal Year 2018 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight* and Chapter 68A of the County Code.

### **B. Scope of Report**

Chapter 68A of the County Code authorizes the County to establish urban district corporations to provide services within the County's urban districts. By law, an urban district corporation exists for five years after its articles of incorporation are accepted for recording by the State Department of Assessments and Taxation. An urban district corporation can be extended for an unlimited number of additional five-year terms by a resolution adopted by the County Council and approved by the County Executive. Before the County renews a corporation's term, the law requires the Office of Legislative Oversight to conduct a performance evaluation that includes feedback from property owners, business owners, and residents from within and around the urban district.

Bethesda is the only urban district in Montgomery County with an urban district corporation. In 1994, the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. (BUP) began its first term as the urban district corporation to manage the Bethesda Urban District. In this capacity, BUP performs landscaping and streetscape maintenance services, plans special events, promotes the urban district, and oversees the operation of the free Bethesda Circulator, a shuttle which serves the downtown area. BUP also manages the Bethesda Transportation Management District and the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District.

BUP has operated for five 5-year terms since its establishment, and the County Council has released four prior OLO evaluations of BUP. On December 3, 2013, the County Council approved Resolution 17-955, which reauthorized the Bethesda Urban Partnership for its fourth five-year term starting on February 1, 2014 and ending on January 31, 2019.

To aid the Council as it considers the reauthorization of BUP for a sixth term, this OLO report:

- Describes BUP's current services, staffing and finances; its progress on the 2014–2019 strategic plan; and the new 2020–2024 strategic plan goals; and
- Presents feedback on BUP's performance from County government staff, community representatives, and other individuals who regularly interact with BUP or benefit from its services.

### **C. Organization**

**Chapter II, Overview of the Bethesda Urban Partnership's Legal Framework**, describes the Bethesda Urban District and other designated districts in downtown Bethesda, and provides an overview of BUP's governing structure, including the State and County laws that govern BUP.

**Chapter III, BUP Operations**, describes BUP's staffing and its maintenance, marketing, transportation management, and other services, BUP's progress on its 2014–2019 strategic plan and the goals and strategies of its 2020–2025 strategic plan.



**Chapter IV, Finances**, describes BUP's funding sources and expenditures for the past five years and the sources of County revenue spent on BUP services.

**Chapter V, Feedback from County Government and Community Representatives**, includes commentary on BUP's performance over the past five years from a variety of individuals who interact directly with BUP or benefit from its services.

**Chapters VI and VII** present the Office of Legislative Oversight's **Findings and Recommendations**.

**Chapter VIII, Agency Comments**, presents comments from the County's Chief Administrative Officer and the Bethesda Urban Partnership's Board of Directors on the final draft of this report.

## **D. Methodology**

Office of Legislative Oversight staff member Carl Scruggs conducted this study, with assistance from Jenna Bauer, a Summer Fellow with OLO, and Sue Richards, senior OLO staff member. To conduct this evaluation, OLO examined County laws and operating budget documents, met with BUP staff and reviewed documents that BUP shared with OLO to respond to OLO's information requests for activity and financial data. The documents BUP shared included spreadsheets that BUP staff use to track financial data and summary documents for two internal databases that BUP staff maintain to track the activity of the Ask Me team and the Bethesda Circulator.

To obtain feedback on BUP's performance, OLO supplemented its document review with survey data and more than 95 field interviews. OLO conducted a survey of 64 visitors to downtown Bethesda and OLO also interviewed: 17 County department staff who interact regularly with BUP; four individuals from nonprofits and advocacy groups active in the Bethesda community; 35 restaurant proprietors and retailers located in the Urban District and four other business owners and developers who work in downtown Bethesda. OLO also reviewed a 39-page memorandum provided by BUP staff from a consultant that BUP hired to conduct focus groups for its strategic planning effort.

## **E. Acknowledgements**

OLO would like to thank the Bethesda Urban Partnership staff for their cooperation, especially Rick Ammirato, Jeff Burton, Jeff Oyer, Stephanie Coppula, Kristen Blackmon, and Robert Donohue, Jr. of the Bethesda Urban Partnership Board of Directors. OLO would also like to thank Jane Fairweather of the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District Board of Directors; Carol Trawick, a former member of both the BUP Board of Directors and the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District Board of Directors; John Tschiderer and Dan Corwin of Federal Realty Investment Trust; Veronique Marier of Bethesda Green; Chief Ned Sherburne of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad; and John Mendez of Bethesda Cares.

OLO appreciates the assistance of County Government staff including Ken Hartman from the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center; Luisa Montero-Diaz and Joe Callaway from the Mid-County Regional Services Center; Reemberto Rodriguez and Richard Bingham from the Silver Spring Regional Services Center; Emil Wolanin from the Department of Transportation; Corey Orlosky, Brady Goldsmith, and Helen Vallone from the Office of Management and Budget; Captain Paul Liquorie of Bethesda's 2<sup>nd</sup> Police District; Division Chief Dave Steckel from Fire and Rescue Services; Casey Anderson, Chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board; Gwen Wright, Robert Kronenberg, and Leslie Howerton from the Montgomery County Planning Department; and Nancy Ambrose and John Nissell of Montgomery Parks.

## CHAPTER II. Background - Special Districts in Bethesda

The County Council established the Bethesda Urban District in 1993, and, in the same year, created the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) as the corporation authorized to manage the district. Since its establishment, BUP has been re-authorized four times by the Council and has taken on additional responsibilities related to other special districts in Bethesda. Table 2-1 below includes a timeline on key events from BUP’s establishment in 1993 to the most recent reauthorization in 2013.

**Table 2-1: Bethesda Urban Partnership Timeline, 1993-2013**

Date	Event
December 1993	Council creates BUP to manage the Bethesda Urban District and approves BUP’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws (Resolution 12-1400)
December 1998	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2004 (Resolution 13-1994)
February 1999	Council adopts Resolution 14-56 which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes a transportation management district in Bethesda</li> <li>• Allows creation of a Transportation Management Organization (TMO)</li> <li>• Approves BUP as a grantee for the TMO</li> </ul>
December 1999	BUP as TMO begins managing the Bethesda Transportation Management District
April 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of Maryland designates Bethesda as an Arts and Entertainment District</li> <li>• BUP becomes the manager of the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District</li> </ul>
January 2004	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2009 (Resolution 15-461)
September 2006	BUP begins managing the Bethesda Circulator
December 2008	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2014 (Resolution 16-786)
December 2013	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2019 (Resolution 17-955)

This chapter provides an overview of the governance structure and history of BUP, and is organized as follows:

- **Section A** provides an overview of the legal requirements for establishing an urban district and an urban district corporation;
- **Section B** describes the BUP articles of incorporation and bylaws;
- **Section C** reviews the other special districts created in Bethesda and their relationship to BUP; and
- **Section D** summarizes the Council action to reauthorize BUP in December 2013.

### A. Overview of the Bethesda Urban District

**General Overview.** County Code Chapter 68A, Montgomery County Urban Districts, permits the County Council to create urban districts. Urban districts are special taxing districts with diverse commercial, institutional, and residential development that the County desires to “maintain and enhance...as prosperous, livable urban centers.”<sup>1</sup> The Code states that the purpose of urban districts is to provide services for the benefit of persons and property within the district that are in addition to the services normally provided by the County.<sup>2</sup> Authorized “additional” services within an urban district include maintaining and improving

<sup>1</sup> County Code § 68A-2(a)

<sup>2</sup> County Code § 68A-3(b)

streetscapes and amenities, promoting and programming public interest activities, enhancing safety and security in public areas, and providing capital projects that promote the growth and stability of the district.

In addition to Bethesda, the Council has also established urban districts in Silver Spring and Wheaton. The law provides that funding for urban district services can come from:

- An urban district tax that may not exceed \$0.30 per \$100 of assessed property value;
- Parking lot district fees, limited to the number of parking spaces multiplied by enforcement hours per year, multiplied by \$0.20;
- A charge on optional method development property for the cost of maintaining off-site amenities, such as streetscape improvements;<sup>3</sup>
- Transfers from the County's general fund, which may be subject to repayment; and
- Other revenue collected by the urban district from various sources, such as charges for services or corporate sponsors.

Funds for urban districts may only be used for the district where they are collected and for the allowable services. Further, the law states that "the proceeds from either the urban district tax or parking fees transferred into an urban district fund must not exceed 90 percent of their combined total."<sup>4</sup>

**Urban District Corporations.** The County Code requires an urban district to be managed by a County department, or by an urban district corporation created by the Council.<sup>5</sup> Maryland law authorizes charter counties to create commercial district management authorities for the purposes of "promotion; marketing; and the provision of security, maintenance, or amenities within the district."<sup>6</sup> The Bethesda Urban Partnership was established as the urban district corporation for the Bethesda Urban District.<sup>7</sup>

The County Code describes an urban district management corporation as "a public instrumentality of the County...[that]...is not within the Executive or Legislative branches of County government, is separate and distinct from the County, and is an independent entity."<sup>8</sup> The Code also states that an urban district corporation may provide the following services:

- Promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities;
- Specialized transportation services;
- Enhancement and maintenance of streetscape; and
- Other initiatives to advance the business and residential environment and sense of community.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Optional development method is "property for which the owner has agreed with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to be responsible for installing and maintaining both on-site and off-site improvements. (County Code § 68A-1(h))

<sup>4</sup> County Code § 68A-4(c)(d)

<sup>5</sup> County Code § 68A-9 (a)

<sup>6</sup> Maryland Code art. 25A, Chartered Counties of Maryland § 5(FF)(ii)

<sup>7</sup> The Silver Spring and Wheaton district do not have urban district corporations, and are instead managed by the County Government.

<sup>8</sup> County Code § 68A-9 (a)

<sup>9</sup> County Code § 68A-9 (b)

In 1995, the County Attorney concluded that an urban district corporation is a “public entity” under County procurement laws, which allows the County to enter into a contract with an urban district corporation without competition.<sup>10</sup> Other County Code requirements for urban district corporations that apply to BUP include:

- Establishing an 11-member Board of Directors, composed of a diverse group of business and residential representatives, that “directs all aspects of the program, management, and finances of the corporation,” may establish rules of procedure, and adopts bylaws for the corporation.<sup>11</sup> The Board is appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. The Board also appoints an executive director for BUP.<sup>12</sup>
- Preparing and submitting a budget to the County’s Office of Management and Budget for review and approval as part of the County’s budget process. Corporations must also submit an annual independent audit and management letter and financial report.<sup>13</sup>
- Using the County’s centralized purchasing system, and making a “good faith” effort to meet County goals for purchasing recycled goods and contracting with minority, female, and disabled-owned businesses (although BUP is not subject to County procurement laws).<sup>14</sup>

Chapter 68A states that an urban district corporation exists for five years after the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation accepts its Articles of Incorporation. The law authorizes the County Council to renew the corporation for additional five-year terms after a performance evaluation by the Office of Legislative Oversight.<sup>15</sup>

## **B. Bethesda Urban Partnership Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws**

County law requires the County Council and County Executive to approve an urban district corporation’s articles of incorporation and bylaws. BUP’s Articles of Incorporation establish the name and duration of the corporation, set forth the powers and restriction on powers, and describe the Board of Directors. The Articles of Incorporation state the corporation’s purposes are to:

- Provide more direct involvement of the community of Bethesda in the provision of services;
- Enlist the active interest and financial support of individuals, citizen and civic groups, firms, and corporations concerned about the improvement of the Urban District;
- Provide services, in addition to those that the Montgomery County Government provides generally;
- Promote and program public interest activities that benefit both residential and commercial interests of the Urban District;
- Collaborate and cooperate with federal, state, and county agencies; civic associations and other improvement associations; and business associations;
- To have and to exercise to the extent necessary or desirable for the accomplishment of any of the aforesaid purposes...any and all powers conferred upon non-stock corporations; and
- Support the activities of the other nonprofit organizations serving the Bethesda Urban District.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> County Code § 11B-41 and February 8, 1995 memorandum from Assistant County Attorney Melnick (Appendix A)

<sup>11</sup> County Code § 68A-10 (d, f, g)

<sup>12</sup> The executive director and other employees of an urban district corporation are not County employees and are not eligible to participate in the County’s retirement program. However, corporations may participate in the County’s health insurance program if the corporation pays the employer’s share of the premiums. BUP has participated in the County’s health insurance program since 1998.

<sup>13</sup> County Code § 68A-12 (d)

<sup>14</sup> County Code § 68A-11(d)

<sup>15</sup> County Code § 68A-12 (e), County Code § 68A-13 (a,b)

<sup>16</sup> *Articles of Incorporation of Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. A Nonstock Corporation*. Article III, § 3 (a-g)

BUP's Bylaws describe the structure of the Board of Directors, including the terms of Board members, Board meetings, and officers and committees of the Board. It also describes the duties of the Executive Director and the Corporation's finance and procurement practices.

The Council and Executive approved BUP's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in 1993. BUP must submit any changes to its Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws to the Executive and Council for approval. Neither BUP's Articles of Incorporation nor Bylaws have changed since they were first approved, with the exception of amending the Articles of Incorporation to reflect reauthorization of BUP.

### **C. County Special Tax Districts and Planning Areas for Downtown Bethesda**

The boundaries of the Bethesda Urban District encompass the Bethesda Central Business District (CBD) and areas around the CBD that mostly fall within the boundaries of the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD). Besides the Bethesda Urban District and the Bethesda PLD, Montgomery County has established a Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD), an Arts and Entertainment District, and a Bethesda CBD Sector Plan Area.

The map on page 10 shows the boundaries for each of these districts. The Bethesda Urban District and the Arts and Entertainment District, which have the same boundaries, cover 234 acres. The Bethesda PLD is slightly smaller (218 acres), and the Transportation Management District (345 acres) and the CBD Sector Plan Area (428 acres) are larger.

#### **1. The Bethesda Parking Lot District**

A parking lot district (PLD) is a legally designated geographic area defined in Chapter 60 of the County Code in which the County can assess a special property tax and collect parking fees (e.g., parking meter or permit fees) to acquire, build, maintain, or operate off-street parking facilities. Parking fees may also be transferred to an urban district fund, transportation management district, or to the Department of Transportation for transit-related activities within a PLD that does not have a transportation management district. Any fees transferred to a transportation management district must not exceed the fees collected in that district. Taxes and fees must be used in the PLD where they were collected.<sup>17</sup> The Bethesda PLD is one of three County parking lot districts. The other districts are in the Silver Spring and Wheaton business districts. A fourth district in Montgomery Hills was merged with Silver Spring in 2017.<sup>18</sup>

#### **2. Transportation Management District**

A transportation management district (TMD) is a geographic area established by the County Council to reduce traffic congestion through transportation demand management. The goals of transportation demand management are to: "increase transportation capacity; reduce existing and future levels of traffic congestion; reduce air and noise pollution; and promote traffic safety and pedestrian access."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> County Code § 60-16 (a, c)

<sup>18</sup> Montgomery Hills is an area along Georgia Avenue, north of the Silver Spring business district. The Montgomery Hills Parking Lot District is the smallest of the four County parking lot districts. It encompasses an area on either side of the Georgia Avenue that extends from Luzerne Avenue on the south (just below the intersection of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Georgia Avenue) to Flora Lane on the north. intersection. See OLO Report 2015-5, *Parking Lot District Fiscal Management and Budgeting*, for more details about each of the four districts and maps of each district's boundaries. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/OLO%20Report%202015-5%20Parking%20Lot%20District%20Fiscal%20Management%20and%20Budgeting.pdf>. Expedited Bill 15-17, which was approved in 2017, merged the Montgomery Hills PLD with the Silver Spring PLD.

<sup>19</sup> County Code § 42A-22 (f)(1-4)

The County Code allows the Department of Transportation (“County DOT”) to sign sole source contracts with a transportation management organization to carry out transportation management programs in a TMD.<sup>20</sup> In 1999, the Council established a TMD in Bethesda, and BUP became the transportation management organization for the Bethesda TMD through a contract managed by the County DOT.<sup>21</sup> As the transportation management organization, BUP is required to:

- Monitor and assess traffic patterns and pedestrian access and safety;
- Promote traffic and parking control measures;
- Promote transportation-related capital projects;
- Promote or implement transit and ridesharing incentives;
- Promote cooperation between the County and other government agencies;
- Create and implement cooperative County/private sector programs to increase ridesharing and transit use; and
- Submit a biennial report to the Department of Transportation in even-numbered years.

Under the authorizing resolution, funding to implement transportation management programs for the Bethesda TMD may include revenue transferred from the Bethesda Parking Lot District, a transportation management fee on new and existing development, and allocation of state or federal grant funds.<sup>22</sup>

The Bethesda TMD also has a 17-member advisory board (11 voting and 6 non-voting members) appointed by the BUP Board of Directors. The TMD Advisory Board’s responsibilities include advising BUP and the County DOT on transportation management issues in downtown Bethesda and advising BUP on TMD operations.

### **3. Arts and Entertainment District**

The Bethesda Urban District received State of Maryland designation as an Arts and Entertainment District in 2002 to help promote the visual and performing arts in Bethesda through tax incentives, special events, and other initiatives. The A&E District was re-designated by the state of Maryland in 2012 for 10 years.

This designation provides County tax incentives including certain property tax credits and exemption from the admission and amusement tax for art and entertainment establishments and artists who reside and work in the district to encourage artists and entertainment venues to locate in Bethesda.<sup>23</sup> As the manager of the district, the BUP markets the arts in Bethesda and organizes events that showcase visual and performing arts. The Arts and Entertainment District has its own 9-member Board of Directors.

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<sup>20</sup> County Code § 42A-23 (c)

<sup>21</sup> Resolution 14-56

<sup>22</sup> County Code § 42A-29

<sup>23</sup> Md. Code art. 83A Department of Business and Economic Development, § 4-(702-703); COMAR 24.05.26; Montgomery County Code Chapter 25 § 52-18L

#### 4. Central Business District Sector Plan Area

The Bethesda Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan Area is a planning area designated by the Montgomery County Planning Board for downtown Bethesda. The 1994 Bethesda CBD Sector Plan and its 2006 amendment to the Woodmont Triangle area established a core development area around the Bethesda Metro Station that includes diverse commercial and residential property; encourages cultural activities; improves streetscapes; and addresses transportation and pedestrian needs.<sup>24</sup> It also stated that the Bethesda Urban Partnership should participate in implementing some of the objectives of the plan, including “retail enhancement, [promotion of Bethesda as a] ‘cultural district,’ and streetscape objectives.”<sup>25</sup>

In May 2017, the County Council approved a new Bethesda Downtown Plan, which updates the Council’s 1994 CBD Sector Plan and its 2006 Woodmont Triangle amendment.<sup>26</sup> Specific goals outlined in the plan call for:

- Ongoing development of Bethesda Row, the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, the Woodmont Triangle, and other established and emerging centers of economic activity;
- Providing “enhanced public services” to residents and businesses in the downtown community;
- Fostering “community enrichment” by creating numerous new parks; preserving community and historic resources; and creating and encouraging the use of public and private gathering places;
- Developing a long-term retail solution for districts with unserved retail demand;
- Developing a ‘high-performance’ area that incentivizes energy-efficient buildings, increased tree canopy cover, and innovative stormwater management to create a sustainable downtown; and
- Increasing the stock of affordable housing in the downtown area by incentivizing expanded affordability; preserving existing, market-rate affordable housing where possible; and promoting both mixed-use and multi-unit residential housing.

#### D. 2014 Reauthorization of the Bethesda Urban Partnership

Prior to the Council’s reauthorization of BUP in January 2014, the BUP Board of Directors approved a new strategic plan for 2014–2019. Additionally, OLO conducted its required evaluation of BUP. The BUP Board identified the following strategies and action items as part of its strategic plan:

- Create a “state of the art” appearance and improve downtown Bethesda’s navigability by creating an attractive streetscape and improving wayfinding and the appearance of the Metro Station;
- Create and implement a marketing plan that enhances and builds a Bethesda Brand, promotes the economic viability of downtown and improves constituent communications;
- Implement a transportation system that mitigates traffic congestion and enhances pedestrian safety; and

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<sup>24</sup> *Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan*. (July 1994); *Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD*. (March 2006)

<sup>25</sup> *Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan*. (July 1994), p. 258.

<sup>26</sup> <http://montgomeryplanning.org/county-council-approves-bethesda-downtown-sector-plan-may-25-session/>

- Ensure a vibrant arts and entertainment district by providing support for individual arts and entertainment organizations and facilitating events that appeal to many Bethesda audiences.

OLO's evaluation recommended that the Council:

- Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. for another five years and retain the requirement for an OLO evaluation before the next reauthorization; and
- Require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before the next reauthorization.

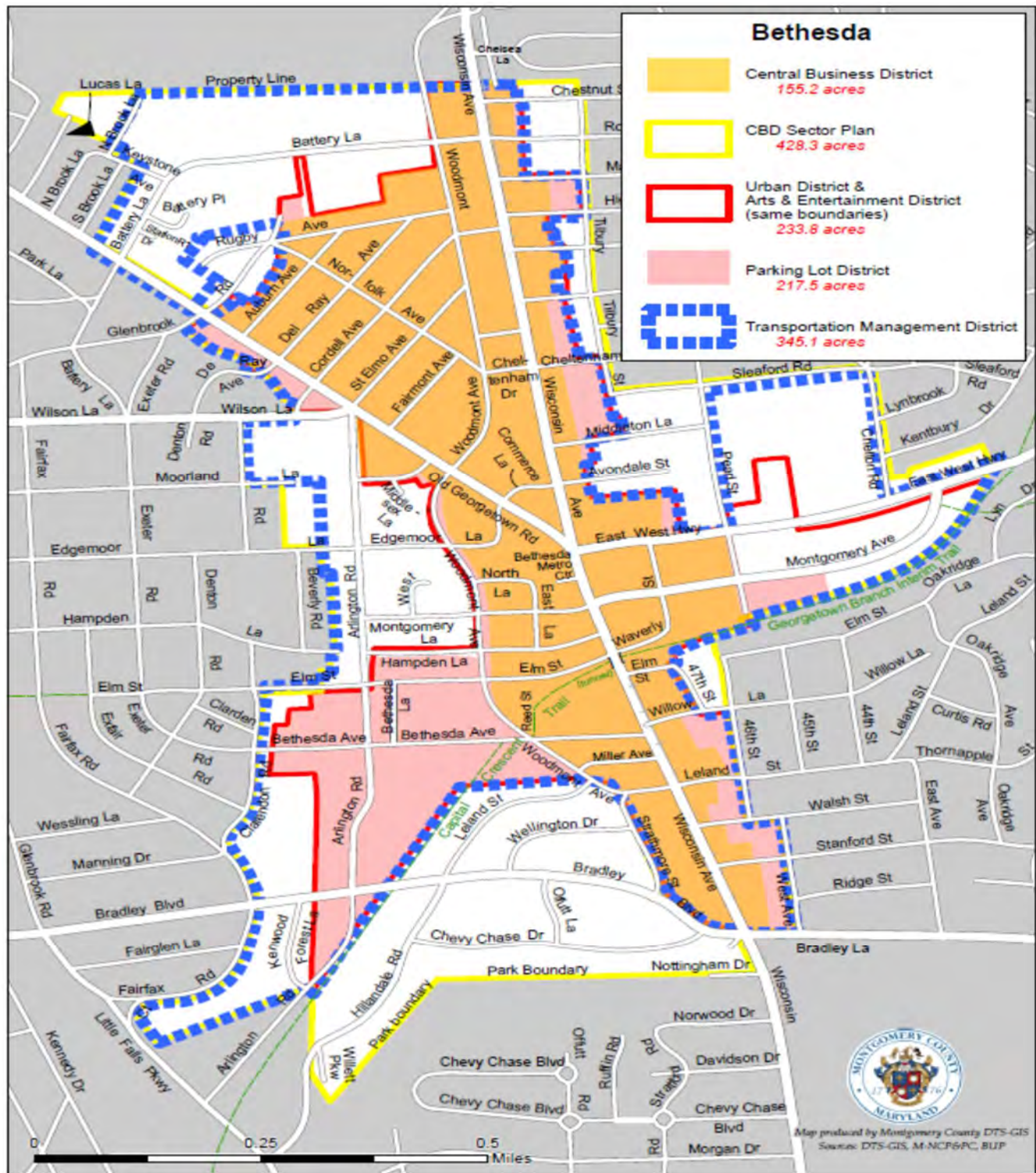
Based on OLO's recommendations and comments from the BUP Board of Directors, in December 2013 the Council chose to:

- Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for a fifth 5-year term from February 1, 2014 through January 31, 2019.
- Ask BUP to update its five-year strategic plan before the Council considers reauthorization in 2019, and, as part of this update, continue to seek input from constituents, to solicit comments on BUP's proposed objectives from relevant County Government departments, and include a status report on objectives identified in the 2014–2019 strategic plan.

Except for annual budget reviews and confirming a re-appointment to the BUP Board of Directors, the Council has taken no further direct action on BUP since December 2013. Indirectly, the Council took action in January 2015 to address concerns with the fiscal health of the Bethesda PLD. This reduced the PLD fund's support for BUP. Transfers from the Bethesda PLD Fund are BUP's largest source of revenue (described in detail on page 33).



## Boundaries for Bethesda's Tax Districts and the Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan Area



## CHAPTER III. Overview of the Bethesda Urban Partnership

This chapter describes Bethesda Urban Partnership's (BUP) organizational structure and its services. The chapter is organized as follows:

**Section A** describes BUP's maintenance, landscaping, marketing, transportation management, and other operating activities.

**Section B** describes the outcomes of BUP's 2014–2019 Strategic Plan and the goals and strategies of its 2019–2024 Strategic Plan.

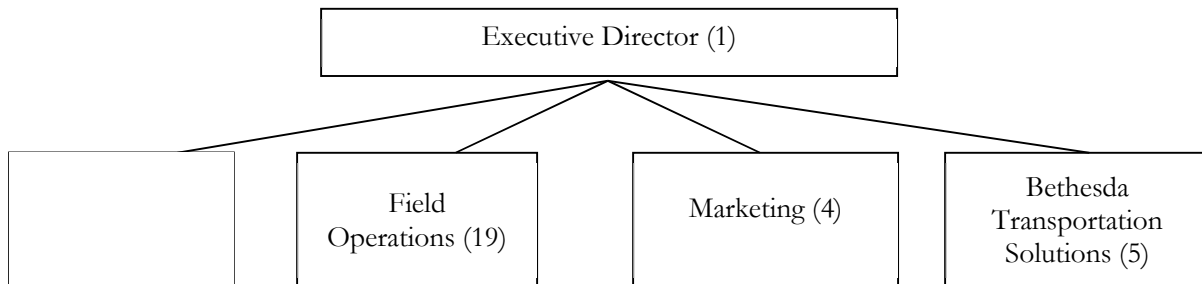
### A. BETHESDA URBAN PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONS

BUP's operations are divided into four divisions: Internal Operations, Field Operations, Marketing, and Transportation Management.

BUP's employee complement remained relatively unchanged from FY14 through FY18. There were 32 full-time and three part-time positions in FY14 and 33 full-time and two year-round part-time positions in FY18.

Exhibit 3-1 below shows the Partnership's organizational structure and the number of staff in each division. Each division has a Director who reports to BUP's Executive Director.

**Figure 3-1: Bethesda Urban Partnership Organizational Chart**



This section describes each division's activities and services, and other BUP activities, including safety and security enhancement, that are not assigned to a particular division.

#### 1. Internal Operations

The Internal Operations division manages BUP's finances and administration. BUP established the Internal Operations division in 2003 and hired a director of finance to oversee the division in 2005. Its primary responsibilities include:

- Maintaining BUP's financial records and providing monthly financial reports to the Board of Directors;
- Preparing annual budgets and cost analyses;
- Managing the annual audit required by the County Code and BUP's contracts with the County;

- Reporting to the County’s Chief Administrative Officer on BUP’s efforts to contract with minority, female, and disabled-owned (MFD) businesses and procurement of recycled goods, as required by County Code;<sup>1</sup> and
- Managing human resources and office administration, including employee compensation and equipment purchases.

## 2. Field Operations

With 19 staff, Field Operations is the largest of BUP’s four divisions. Field Operations provides maintenance and landscaping activities (14 positions), the Ambassador Program (5 positions), and contracts out the operations of the Bethesda Circulator. The Ambassador Program, also known as the “Ask Me Team,” provides directions and other information services and assistance to downtown Bethesda visitors. The Bethesda Circulator is a bus that circulates throughout the downtown area.

### a. Maintenance and Landscaping

BUP’s field operations staff maintain and landscape public property within the Bethesda Urban District, and also provide contract maintenance services on certain non-public or non-County owned properties. The field operations management team conducts regular inspections and keeps a service log to monitor service provision and quality.

**Maintenance and Landscaping in the Bethesda Urban District.** Each year, the Bethesda Urban Partnership executes an agreement with the County to manage the Bethesda Urban District. Like the FY14–FY18 agreements, the FY19 agreement states that BUP will conduct maintenance activities on “all public rights-of-way within the urban district boundaries.”<sup>2</sup> The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center administers the contract.

Under its contract, BUP provides litter collection, trash receptacle service, sidewalk cleaning and repair, landscape and tree maintenance, street sweeping, and maintenance of the Bethesda Metro pedestrian tunnel within the Bethesda Urban District. The contract specifies minimum standards for each regularly scheduled maintenance activity. Table 3-1 describes each activity with the FY19 contract specifications.

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<sup>1</sup> County Code § 68A-11 (d)(1)

<sup>2</sup> Article I, paragraph 3

**Table 3-1: Bethesda Urban District Maintenance and Landscaping Activities**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Required Frequency</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Litter Collection</b>	Once per day except specified holidays	Collect and dispose of litter from sidewalks, pedestrian bridges, planters, tree pits, and areas outside district if it primarily benefits the district
<b>Trash Receptacle Service</b>	3 times per week and daily on weekends	Empty trash cans, replace bags, and pick up litter
<b>Brick Sidewalk Cleaning</b>	As needed	Clean all brick sidewalks to remove gum, paint, and other debris with an environmentally safe method
<b>Landscape Maintenance</b>	2 times/year	Mulch and fertilize all planting areas and prune shrubs
	Continuously	Control weeds
	As needed	Water plants and use integrated pest management techniques
<b>Tree Maintenance</b>	As needed	Clean up debris in tree pits, mulch, reset bricks, control weeds and pests, water, prune
	Annually	Fertilize
<b>Tree Planting</b>	As needed	Plant new and replacement trees
<b>Mowing</b>	12 times/year	Mow, remove litter, and edge mowed areas in public right-of-way, fertilize as needed
<b>Snow Removal</b>	As needed	Clear snow and ice from crosswalks
<b>Street Sweeping</b>	Not specified	Remove debris from curb lines and curbed medians
<b>Sidewalk Repair</b>	As needed	Maintain all sidewalks
<b>Metro Pedestrian Tunnel Maintenance</b>	Daily	Broom sweep the tunnel, clean handrails, remove trash
	Every other day	Wash tunnel floors
	Monthly	Pressure clean walls and floors
	As needed	Replace burnt out light bulbs
<b>Bethesda Trail Tunnel Gates</b>	Daily	Open gates at 6:00 a.m. and close at 10:00 p.m.

Source: Annual Agreement by and between Montgomery County, Maryland and Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., FY19

**Maintenance of Optional Method Development Properties.** BUP’s annual agreement with the County to manage the Bethesda Urban District states that BUP “may enter into agreements with optional method developers enabling the Corporation to maintain streetscape amenities on private or public properties in the urban district.”

In practice, the Planning Board requires optional method development properties (“OMD properties”) to receive services from BUP to maintain streetscape amenities such as landscaping and sidewalks in the public right-of-way as a condition of its site plan approval. However, as recommended by the Office of the County Attorney, BUP does not enter into formal written agreements with optional method developers. The County Attorney states because Section 68 A-4(3) of the County Code provides the County with statutory authority to assess and collect the charges addressed, agreements between optional method developers and BUP are not required.

BUP currently provides maintenance services in the public right-of-way for 36 OMD properties.<sup>3</sup> After a new OMD project is built, BUP’s director of field operations visits the property and inventories the amenities to determine the services that BUP will perform. BUP sends this information to the Bethesda Chevy Chase

<sup>3</sup> 12 new optional method development properties have been built since OLO’s last evaluation in 2013.

Regional Services Center (“BCC-RSC”). Additionally, BUP reports quarterly to BCC-RSC’s urban district manager on actual services performed.

BCC-RSC’s urban district manager administers the County’s contract with BUP for services in the Urban District. The manager bills OMD property owners on a quarterly basis for the maintenance services that BUP provides and notifies them of any changes in services or fees. The County’s contract specifies that BUP be paid one-twelfth of the annual contract amount every month for its Urban District services. BCC-RSC’s monthly payment to BUP also includes a pro-rated estimate of the quarterly service fee payments that BCC-RSC receives from OMD property owners.

**Groundskeeping for Public Parking Lots and Garages.** BUP provides groundskeeping services for six parking lots and five parking garages in Bethesda under a County contract managed by the Department of Transportation, Division of Parking Management. Under the contract, BUP:

- Maintains turf by mowing, testing soil, fertilizing, controlling weeds, and aerating and overseeding;
- Edges curbs and walkways;
- Maintains tree pits and plant beds by weeding, fertilizing, edging, mulching, and trimming and pruning shrubs and trees;
- Collects litter; and
- Implements insect and disease control measures.

**Trash removal and street sweeping in the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts.** The County Code authorizes an urban district corporation to “provide any authorized service to another Corporation or urban district.”<sup>4</sup> BUP previously had agreements to provide trash collection<sup>5</sup> and street sweeping services to the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts under two contracts administered by the Mid-County and Silver Spring Regional Services Centers.

In 2014 and 2015, BUP collected trash five days per week from 183 public trash receptacles within the Silver Spring Urban District. Beginning in 2016 through the end of FY18, the Silver Spring Urban District reduced these services to weekend trash collection only. In FY19, the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts ended their trash removal contract with BUP. In both cases, the urban district managers decided to bring the services in-house for budget reasons.

A separate contract for streetsweeping stipulates the streets in each district that BUP must sweep three times per week. This contract was in effect for the five-year term and is in effect in FY19.

**Other Maintenance and Landscaping Contracts.** The County Code permits BUP to provide services “outside the boundaries of [the] urban district if the service will primarily benefit businesses or residents in the urban district.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> County Code § 68A-9 (b)

<sup>5</sup> Per the specification in the service contract, BUP empties receptacles and also picks up any spilled trash within five feet of a receptacle.

<sup>6</sup> County Code § 68A-9 (b)(4)

As such, BUP has entered into MOU's with the State Highway Administration and the National Institutes of Health to maintain Bethesda "gateway" areas and another contract to provide maintenance for a private property within the urban district:

- **State Highway Administration.** In 2000, BUP signed an MOU with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to provide maintenance services in certain roadway medians considered to be "gateways" to the Bethesda Urban District. In 2013, following a review of the original agreement, BUP and the State Highway Administration signed an extension to the Memorandum of Understanding. The 2013 agreement slightly extended the limits of the medians BUP maintains. The Wisconsin Avenue medians extend from Pooks Hill Road south to Woodmont Avenue, and from the southern district boundary south to Somerset. The Bradley Boulevard median extends from Wisconsin Avenue west to Goldsboro Road.
- **National Institutes of Health (NIH).** In 2013, BUP entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with NIH to provide grounds maintenance for a green space NIH owns at the corner of Woodmont and Wisconsin Avenues.
- **Imagination Stage.** In accordance with an ongoing contract between BUP and Imagination Stage, BUP provides tree maintenance, bed maintenance, and flower planting services for the Imagination Stage, a nonprofit organization located in the Urban District.

**Addressing Community Maintenance Concerns.** As described in Table 3-2, BUP frequently works with the County and the broader community to address additional maintenance concerns in the Bethesda Urban District.

**Table 3-2: Examples of BUP's Efforts to Address Community Maintenance Concerns**

Issue	Description
<b>Streetlight Maintenance</b>	BUP assists the County Department of Transportation ("County DOT") with streetlight maintenance by providing a monthly outage report. BUP implemented a GIS system in 2012 with up-to-date streetlight location data to track outages internally and facilitate reporting. BUP staff reported in 2018 that this data has been incorporated into the County's online maintenance reporting system.
<b>Crosswalk Restriping</b>	In 2015, BUP completed an inventory of all painted crosswalks and provided it to County DOT to assist with repainting of intersections where needed.
<b>Pothole Repair and Road Maintenance</b>	BUP has an informal arrangement with County DOT to repair potholes in the Bethesda Urban District. Either the County supplies BUP with materials, and BUP maintenance staff repair potholes as part of their regular duties; or, when the County does not supply BUP with materials, BUP reports potholes to County DOT and DOT repairs them. BUP does not receive any funding specifically for this service. BUP also works with County DOT to address emergency road maintenance issues (example: sinkholes) by assisting with monitoring and maintenance of temporary repairs.
<b>Recycling Collection with Bethesda Green</b>	Bethesda Green aims to promote environmentally friendly, or "green" practices in downtown Bethesda. To this end, Bethesda Green has provided recycling cans to be used in the public rights-of-way in Bethesda and BUP currently empties the cans.
<b>Bethesda Metro Station and Bus Bay Maintenance</b>	In late 2016/early 2017, WMATA replaced the three Bethesda Metro escalators, fixed an existing water leak at the escalator entrance, and added additional lighting to the escalators and the train platform. BUP added artistic murals to the Bus Bay Tunnel area and improved lighting to the tunnel to 7475 Wisconsin Ave. BUP continues to participate in the Bethesda Metro Improvement Task Force along with the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce, the County Government, WMATA and the Bethesda Hyatt-Regency.
<b>Downtown Wayfinding Improvements</b>	In 2012, BUP created a wayfinding task force to solicit comments from constituents on Bethesda's existing street name and "trailblazer" signs. Based on their findings, the BUP Board of Directors decided to return the responsibility for the maintenance of street signs to the County DOT, to use County DOT's standard and to eliminate the outdated existing trailblazer signs.

## b. Ambassador Program

The County Code charges urban district corporations with providing “promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities.”<sup>7</sup> BUP’s FY19 annual agreement with the County to manage the urban district states that BUP may “conduct...activities to advance the business and residential environment and sense of community in the urban district through such measures as enhanced security...and other community initiatives.”<sup>8</sup>

BUP fulfills this charge partly through the ambassador program, more commonly known as the “Ask Me Team.” As part of the Ask Me Team, five staff provide directions to Bethesda visitors, offer motorist assistance, and notify other BUP staff or appropriate County or State offices about emergency maintenance or safety issues. Team members also have first aid, CPR, and CERT training.

The Ask Me Team operates Wednesdays through Saturdays from 1:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and on Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in April through November, and on Wednesdays through Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. November through March. Some team members patrol the downtown area at regular intervals to identify potential streetscape issues, such as trash or graffiti. Others are stationed at three kiosks where they provide brochures about Bethesda, including maps, restaurant guides, event flyers, and transportation information to those in need, including citizens, motorists, proprietors, the homeless, and others seeking emergency help.

BUP has developed a log sheet and an internal database to track Ask Me Team activity levels. Team members fill out a daily log sheet that shows who they interacted with and the nature of the request. The log sheets are submitted to the Field Operations manager who maintains an internal activity database. The data in Table 3-3 summarize entries from this database. (OLO did not independently verify this data.)

Table 3-3 displays the total number of “assists,” or fulfilled requests for assistance provided by Ask Me Team staff for five separate groups of individuals in downtown Bethesda from 2016 through 2018. As shown, the great majority of requests for assistance during each year come from private citizens, followed by businesspeople. Ask Me Team staff also regularly fulfill a smaller number of contacts with the homeless, police/fire officials, and motorists. Of note, total contacts with homeless individuals tripled from 311 in 2016 to 949 in 2018.

**Table 3-3: Ask Me Team Fulfilled Assistance Requests by Source, 2016 – 2018**

Source of Request for Assistance	#			%*		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Citizens	19,862	17,477	17,183	94%	90%	92%
Motorists	46	50	29	0%	0%	0%
Police/Fire Officials	108	100	102	1%	1%	1%
Homeless	311	1,003	949	1%	5%	5%
Business	707	804	332	3%	4%	2%
<b>Total Assists</b>	<b>21,034</b>	<b>19,434</b>	<b>18,595</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: OLO and Bethesda Urban Partnership

\* Percentages of requests for assistance from each group are rounded to the nearest percentage point – as a result, combined shares for years 2016-2018 may not equal exactly 100%.

<sup>7</sup> County Code § 68A-9 (b)

<sup>8</sup> Article I, paragraph 2



### c. Bethesda Circulator

The Bethesda Circulator is a free bus service running through downtown Bethesda with 20 stops. The Circulator runs Monday to Thursday from 7 a.m. to midnight, Friday from 7 a.m. to midnight, and Saturday from 10 a.m. to midnight. Appendix B provides a map of the Circulator route. Funding and operational responsibilities have changed over the years:

- The service first started in FY01 as the “Bethesda 8 Trolley.” From FY01–FY06, Montgomery County Ride-On operated the trolley, which was funded through subsidies from the State of Maryland and the County’s Mass Transit Fund.
- In September 2006, the County added the Bethesda Circulator to the services specified in BUP’s Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD) contract and transferred the funding source to the Bethesda Parking Lot District.<sup>9</sup>
- In FY09, the County transferred responsibility for operating and funding the Circulator from BUP’s TMD contract to BUP’s annual agreement with BCC-RSC. At the time, BUP staff and representatives from Commuter Services in the County DOT and from BCC-RSC explained that this change was justified because the Circulator primarily serves as a parking garage shuttle and a downtown residential circulator and only incidentally as a commuter service.

In 2018, the contract arrangement established in FY09 continues in force. BUP subcontracts the Circulator’s service operations to a private party, but uses its own in-house staff to provide marketing, customer service training for drivers, and maintenance of the signs and benches at Circulator stops.

BUP also maintains an internal database to track the Circulator’s ridership. Each Circulator bus is equipped with a counter to track the number of riders, and drivers manually count passengers to verify ridership numbers. BUP’s contractor includes these counts as part of the monthly report it submits to BUP.

Circulator ridership data from 2008 to 2018 are displayed in Table 3-4 (on the next page). Ridership has increased from an average of just over 21,000 riders per month in 2009 to over 34,000 riders per month in 2017 and 2018. This was likely due to increased demand for bus service in the Bethesda area and an expansion to the route that was funded by the County.

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<sup>9</sup>The County Code authorizes urban district corporations to offer “specialized transportation services, including jitney service.” County Code § 68A-9 (b)(2)

**Table 3-4: Bethesda Circulator Ridership Trends,  
Average Monthly Riders  
2008 - 2018**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Monthly Riders</b>	<b>% Change from previous year</b>
2008	22,608	-4%
2009	21,098	-7%
2010	22,741	8%
2011	22,826	0.4%
2012	25,277	11%
2013	24,964	-1%
2014	29,434	18%
2015	29,516	0.3%
2016	34,766	18%
2017	34,741	-0.1%
2018*	34,560	-1%

Source: BUP based on monthly contractor reports.

\* The 2018 monthly averages are based on six months of ridership data from January through June.

### **3. Marketing**

BUP's annual agreement with the County to manage the urban district states that BUP may “plan, coordinate, and manage promotional activities and events that benefit both commercial and residential interests within the urban district.”<sup>10</sup> The Marketing team includes four full-time staff. BUP's marketing division coordinates these types of efforts through general marketing activities, special events, and management of the Arts and Entertainment District.

#### **a. General Marketing Activities**

The BUP marketing division uses a variety of methods to disseminate information about the Bethesda Urban District, including maintaining a website, conducting social media outreach, interacting with local media, and publishing written materials.

BUP's website describes the Bethesda Urban Partnership and provides information about downtown Bethesda, including a parking map and information on local shopping, dining, and lodging facilities. Additionally, BUP uses its website to promote special events they sponsor or events that are organized by other Bethesda businesses and organizations. The website also posts press releases for local news media.

BUP conducts social media outreach via Facebook and Twitter accounts for both BUP as a whole and for Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS), the brand BUP uses to market its transportation management services. BUP has over 6,100 “likes” on Facebook and, as of November 2018, 4,513 followers on Twitter. BUP also distributes weekly promotional emails to approximately 8,000 subscribers.

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<sup>10</sup> Article I, paragraph 2

The marketing division publishes free booklets and brochures about Bethesda. BUP distributes these to local businesses in a variety of ways, including monthly deliveries to downtown Bethesda's five hotels and through its online ordering system. These publications include:

- *Destination Downtown Bethesda*, which provides telephone and address listings for restaurants, retailers, and services;
- *Eat Here*, a restaurant guide for the downtown Bethesda area;
- *The Art of Downtown Bethesda*, a guide to the arts in Bethesda;
- An events calendar and flyers that advertise individual events; and
- The Bethesda Circulator flyer, a map that shows the Circulator route and hours of operation as well as downtown Bethesda's parking garages and surface lots.

BUP also maintains a database of 200 volunteers to recruit for assistance at events. For example, staff report that they use up to 150 volunteers for events such as Taste of Bethesda (see description below). Finally, BUP has organized focus groups with local businesses, residents, and businesses to discuss cooperative marketing opportunities.

### **b. Special Events**

BUP organizes several major events in downtown Bethesda annually. Altogether, BUP reports that these events attract over 100,000 attendees. Events include:

- *Taste of Bethesda*, an annual October event that allows visitors to sample food from local restaurants;
- *Imagination Bethesda*, an annual children's art festival held each June;
- *Bethesda Outdoor Movies: Stars on the Avenue*, five evenings of free movies shown in the Woodmont Triangle area;
- *Local Writer's Showcase*, a two-day event that honors the winners of the annual writing contests BUP holds in participation with *Bethesda Magazine*, which replaced the previously-held *Literary Festival*;<sup>11</sup>
- *Summer Concert Series*, free concerts featuring a variety of music on Wednesdays and Thursdays from May through July; and
- *Winter Wonderland*, an annual December event that includes a professional choral concert and performances by children's groups.

### **c. Arts and Entertainment District**

The Bethesda Urban District received State of Maryland designation as an Arts and Entertainment District in 2002. The Arts and Entertainment District is a separate non-profit organization with the ability to raise its own funds. However, BUP's marketing division manages the Arts and Entertainment District as part of its mission to promote commercial interests and program public interest activities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Bethesda Urban Partnership Scaling Back, Rebranding Literary Festival," Bethesda Beat, <http://www.bethesdamagazine.com/Bethesda-Beat/2017/Bethesda-Urban-Partnership-Scaling-Back-Rebranding-Literary-Festival/>, accessed July 25, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> County Code § 68A-3(b)

BUP's activities related to the Arts and Entertainment District involve:

- Providing information to artists who are interested in working and living in Bethesda;
- Participating in annual meetings organized by the State of Maryland for all Arts and Entertainment Districts;
- Submitting an annual report of its activities to the State;
- Planning, promoting, and managing arts events and initiatives; and
- Managing Gallery B, a space that opened in October 2011 where local and regional artists can display their work at reduced rates, and Studio B, a subsidized studio space for artists that opened in 2013.

Events organized by BUP include:

- *Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards*, an annual musical performance contest awarding a \$10,000 prize to a talented songwriter;
- *Bethesda Film Fest*, a documentary film festival for regional filmmakers that was held for the first time in March of 2013;
- *Bethesda Fine Arts Festival*, a two-day event in May that allows 150 artists from 25 states to sell their work and participate in a juried competition;
- *Bethesda Painting Awards*, a juried art competition for about 350 regional painters that includes cash prizes and an opportunity to have their work displayed in Bethesda;
- *The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards*, a juried competition for about 400 artists that includes cash prizes and an opportunity to have their work displayed in Bethesda;
- *Bethesda Art Walk*, a monthly event that promotes local art galleries – galleries are open into the evening and attendees can participate in free guided tours;
- *Play in a Day*, an opportunity for playwrights, directors, and actors to write, direct, and perform a play in 24 hours; and
- *Yappy Hour*, first held in October 2017, features two pop-up dog parks, one for small dog breeds and one for large dog breeds, as well as live music and food, beer, and wine provided by Bethesda restaurants.

BUP reports that these events attract over 30,000 people and over 1,000 artists annually. BUP raises money for these events through sponsorships and fees paid by participating artists and organizations. The cash prizes for the Bethesda Painting Awards, the Trawick Prize, and the Bernard Ebb Songwriting Awards have been endowed by an individual donor.

In addition, BUP's Arts and Entertainment District created the "Paint the Town" initiative in 2015 to promote the creation of public art murals in downtown Bethesda. Artists who are 18 years of age or older, residents of Washington, DC, Maryland, or Virginia, and have prior experience with designing large-scale murals are eligible to submit design proposals for public art murals on designated sites within Bethesda. An award of \$50,000 is given to the selected artist.

#### **4. Transportation Management**

BUP's Transportation Management division manages the Bethesda Transportation Management District under a contract administered by Commuter Services in the County DOT. BUP has marketed the services provided under this contract as "Bethesda Transportation Solutions." The division includes four full-time and one part-time staff.

##### **a. Monitoring Parking, Pedestrian and Commuter Trends**

BUP's Transportation Management contract with the County DOT specifies that BUP must:

- Conduct an annual inventory of public and private parking supply, pedestrian facilities, transit services, and utilization of these facilities and services; and
- Complete an annual commuter survey of employees in the Bethesda TMD and seek to attain an 80% participation rate.

Every year BUP must file either a biennial report (in even-numbered years) or an interim report (in odd-numbered years) with the County. BUP submitted and the County approved its FY14–FY15 biennial report in March of 2016. In 2018, BUP submitted a draft of its FY16–FY17 biennial report, in accordance with their contract. This draft is under review by Commuter Services in the County DOT.

##### **b. Promoting Alternate Modes of Transportation**

BUP works with employers and employees in Bethesda to promote alternate modes of transportation. According to BUP's contract, the organization must:

- Assist employers with 25 employees or more to develop traffic mitigation plans, as required by law;<sup>13</sup>
- Work with businesses that are relocating to Bethesda to help them implement plans to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles;
- Market alternate modes of transportation to employers and employees and provide carpool and vanpool ride matching services;
- Monitor the participation of Share-a-Ride District Parking reduction participants and provide the Department of Transportation with information to facilitate billing of participants; and
- Track which property owners must pay the TMD fee and provide the Department of Transportation with billing information.

According to BUP's FY14–15 biennial report on transportation management, the percent of commuters using alternate modes of transportation (i.e., modes other than single occupancy vehicles) reached nearly 42% in FY12, but dropped back to 34% by 2014; 37% is the mode share goal for Bethesda.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, BUP's FY14–15 biennial report states that BUP helped 137 businesses prepare Transportation Mitigation Plans.

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<sup>13</sup> County Code § 42A-24

<sup>14</sup> Bethesda CBD Sector Plan, 1994

BUP's contract with the County DOT authorizes BUP to conduct marketing and outreach on alternate modes of transportation to employers in downtown Bethesda and their employees. BUP markets alternate transportation methods using a variety of strategies, described in Table 3-5.

**Table 3-5: BUP Marketing and Outreach Efforts on Alternate Modes of Transportation**

Type	Description
<b>Website</b>	The Bethesda Transportation Solutions website provides information about public transit, biking, parking, and pedestrian safety. It also provides information about a variety of specific programs for commuters, including carpools and vanpools, tax incentives, the guaranteed ride home program, park-and-ride lots, and telecommuting. For employers, the site highlights County laws on transportation management, employer tax incentives, and information on carpools and vanpools.
<b>Commuter Information Days</b>	BUP transportation management staff make presentations to employees or set up an informational table in a building lobby to distribute information about alternate forms of transportation and commuter programs to businesses in the TMD.
<b>Monthly Newsletter</b>	BUP distributes a monthly transportation management newsletter with information about commuter programs, tips on alternate modes of transportation, and information about events.
<b>Events</b>	BUP coordinates events specific to downtown Bethesda and as part of larger regional initiatives. The annual Walk and Ride Challenge calls on teams of workers in downtown Bethesda to compete to win by walking the most steps over the course of three weeks. BUP's Bike to Work Day "Pit Stop" includes speakers and prizes as part of a regional event encouraging commuters to ride bikes. BUP also coordinates activities around World Car Free Day in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. BUP obtains private sponsorship for these events to provide prizes to participants.
<b>Bicycling Classes</b>	BUP works with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and Montgomery County Commuter Services to provide bicycling classes aimed at individuals interested in commuting via bicycle on city streets.

## 5. Other Services

### a. Enhancing Safety and Security

The County Code states that an urban district should "enhance the safety and security of an area."<sup>15</sup> BUP's agreement with the County's BCC-RSC to manage the urban district states that BUP must "implement a method to service after-hours Police and [Department of Transportation] requests for street cleaning and removal of road blockages within the urban district."<sup>16</sup>

The Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) District 2 Station and Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) Battalion 2 report a high degree of collaboration with BUP. Examples include:

- BUP responds to MCPD requests for assistance with clearing the roadway of debris related to storms or vehicle collisions;
- MCPD and BUP cooperate to close and re-open streets for special events;

<sup>15</sup> County Code § 68A-3(b)

<sup>16</sup> Article I, paragraph 6

- BUP and the District 2 police unit for the Central Business District communicate using mobile phones, which allows them to notify each other when there is a situation that needs attention;
- BUP's offices are the designated alternative command center for the Montgomery County Police District 2 station; and
- BUP supports MCFRS by proactively addressing safety issues such as securing loose objects and clearing storm drains before storms and alerting MCFRS of issues such as car fuel leaks.

In addition, 10 BUP staff received Community Emergency Response Team training. BUP staff also participate in the quarterly meetings of the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce's Public Safety Council with MCPD and MCFRS to coordinate emergency response in Bethesda.

**b. Supporting County Departments' Relationships with Community Business Partners and Residents**

BUP assists County Government departments and other partners by liaising with businesses in downtown Bethesda regarding issues that may affect them. For example:

- BUP assists the County DOT in obtaining input from and providing information to businesses regarding changes to lane markings, time limits on parking meters, and other issues;
- BUP assists MCFRS and MCPD in liaising with the business community concerning gas leaks, homelessness, and other safety and security issues.
- BUP assists the Montgomery County Planning Department with educating Bethesda residents about their ongoing or upcoming initiatives, such as public art projects.

**B. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

In 1998, OLO completed an evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership. Based on OLO's report and recommendations, the Council requested that BUP prepare a five-year strategic plan for the next reauthorization period. Since then, BUP has prepared four consecutive strategic plans for 2003–2007, 2008–2012, 2014–2019, and 2019–2024. This section describes BUP's progress on the goals in the 2014–2019 Strategic Plan as well as the new strategic goals and strategies in their 2019–2024 Strategic Plan.

**1. BUP's Progress on their 2014–2019 Strategic Plan Goals**

BUP's 2014–2019 Strategic Plan established a set of strategic goals and objectives for four main areas: maintenance, marketing and communications, transportation, and the Arts & Entertainment District. Table 3-6 on the following page lists these goals along with the major actions BUP has taken to accomplish these goals. The plan also included specific requests for Council action with potential legal and contractual impacts, described on page 8 of this report, along with the Council's response.

While BUP's major responsibilities have not changed since 2014, its actions show that it has expanded its services or worked to meet changing community needs. See Appendix C for BUP's 2019–2024 Strategic Plan.

**Table 3-6: Bethesda Urban Partnership Strategic Goals, 2014–2019 and Major Actions Taken**

<p><b>Maintenance Goal: Create a State-of-the-Art appearance and easier navigability for downtown Bethesda.</b></p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Create a unified and attractive downtown Bethesda streetscape</li> <li>B. Improve wayfinding in downtown Bethesda</li> <li>C. Use technology to manage downtown Bethesda’ infrastructure</li> <li>D. Improve appearance of Bethesda Metro Station and Bus Bay</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions Taken:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BUP created a new GIS streetlight database to report outages more efficiently and effectively.</li> <li>• BUP is working with M-NCPPC to develop new parks as part of the new downtown Sector Plan.</li> <li>• In 2017, when WMATA replaced the Bethesda Metro escalators and added more lighting, BUP added artistic improvements to the Bethesda Bus Bay and Metro gateway areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Marketing and Communications Goal: Create and implement a successful marketing plan to ensure that Bethesda is at the regional forefront of attracting customers and businesses.</b></p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Enhance and build downtown Bethesda’s brand</li> <li>B. Promote the economic viability of downtown Bethesda</li> <li>C. Improve communication to constituents</li> <li>D. Develop relationships with nearby constituents</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions Taken:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BUP updated its website in 2012 with additional features and a comprehensive map of parking spots.</li> <li>• In 2016, BUP commissioned a series of marketing videos featuring downtown Bethesda restaurants and retailers to share with developers, conference organizers, and other parties.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transportation Goal: Develop a transportation system that has complementary vehicular and non-vehicular options.</b></p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Improve pedestrian safety</li> <li>B. Improve non-single occupancy vehicular options</li> <li>C. Ease traffic congestion</li> <li>D. Monitor development and traffic plans that impact downtown Bethesda</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions Taken:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2014, BUP conducted a survey of Circulator riders to solicit comments on its service and recommendations for suggested improvements.</li> <li>• In 2015, Bethesda Transportation Solutions performed an inventory of all painted crosswalks in its service area and provided it to the County DOT for repainting work.</li> <li>• In 2015 and 2016, the SHA added new crosswalks and pedestrian crossings to improve accessibility across Wisconsin Ave.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Arts &amp; Entertainment Goal: Ensure that Bethesda is a vibrant arts &amp; entertainment district that attracts artists, arts patrons and arts organizations.</b></p> <p><u>Strategies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Support individual arts &amp; entertainment organizations</li> <li>B. Facilitate events to appeal to Bethesda’s many audiences</li> <li>C. Add more art elements to downtown Bethesda</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions Taken:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2014, BUP opened Studio B for visual artists to create and sell artwork, and will also open and operate a new arts center at the Cheval Condominiums later in 2018.</li> <li>• In 2017, BUP hosted the first of its “Yappy Hour” pop-up dog park events.</li> <li>• In 2015 and 2016, BUP and the A&amp;E District enabled the design and creation of two new public arts murals on the Capital Crescent Trail Retaining Wall and the Bethesda Metro Bus Bay.</li> </ul>

Sources: Bethesda Urban Partnership, Strategic Plan 2014–2019 and Strategic Plan 2019–2024



## 2. 2019–2024 Strategic Plan

In July 2018, BUP submitted its strategic plan for 2019–2024 to the County Council. The BUP Board of Directors hired the Alineo Group, Inc. to support the Board’s year-long strategic planning process. The consultant conducted six one-on-one interviews and seven stakeholder “engagement sessions” with groups of six to ten participants that generated feedback from residents, employers, visitors, developers, and other parties from the Bethesda area. BUP supplemented this work with its own survey completed by 234 people.

This feedback indicated that stakeholders gave BUP consistently high ratings for its staff and their knowledge of the Bethesda community. BUP received praise for its ability to organize and promote events, maintain the downtown Bethesda environment, and communicate effectively with the County. When asked about areas of unmet need, respondents suggested BUP could provide more communication about upcoming construction-related needs, provide more assistance in helping to attract and retain retail businesses, and work to promote more arts and entertainment events for younger residents and visitors.

BUP’s 2019–2024 strategic plan is attached at Appendix C. As Table 3-7 below shows, the plan organizes BUP’s strategic efforts into four main areas, and identifies goals and/or strategies for each area.

**Table 3-7: Bethesda Urban Partnership Strategic Goals and Strategies, 2019–2024**

Area	Specified Strategic Goals	Specific Strategies
<i>Promoting the Bethesda Brand</i>	Inform a regional, national, and global marketing plan to express the Bethesda Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Develop a clearly-defined Bethesda Brand communicated regionally and globally</li> <li>B. Enhanced communication by BUP with constituents and stakeholders</li> <li>C. Create a shared sense of place</li> </ul>
<i>Beautification</i>	---	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Beautification through art</li> <li>B. Enhanced branding and wayfinding</li> <li>C. Activated and attractive urban spaces</li> <li>D. Updated streetscape guidelines</li> <li>E. Focus on sidewalk and crosswalk enhancements</li> <li>F. Targeted fundraising efforts</li> </ul>
<i>Arts &amp; Entertainment</i>	---	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Economic development through art</li> <li>B. Incorporate art into the landscape</li> <li>C. Increased fundraising potential of the A&amp;E District’s non-profit charitable status</li> </ul>
<i>Mobility</i>	Work with the County DOT on a five-year capital improvement plan to upgrade streetscape infrastructure in areas not slated for development, with special attention to increased pedestrian safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Enhanced mobility infrastructure</li> <li>B. Develop new wayfinding masterplan</li> <li>C. Progress toward meeting the Downtown Bethesda Plan’s non-auto driver mode share (NADMS) goals</li> <li>D. Activate Norfolk Ave. as a main street</li> <li>E. Construction impact mitigation</li> <li>F. Bethesda Circulator expansion</li> </ul>

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership, Strategic Plan 2019-2024

## CHAPTER IV. The Bethesda Urban Partnership's Finances

This chapter provides a review of BUP's revenues and expenditure trends for the five-year period beginning with the Council's last reauthorization of BUP in FY14. The chapter is organized as follows:

**Section A** describes BUP's FY18 expenditures and FY14–FY18 trends;

**Section B** presents BUP's County and non-County revenue trends;

**Section C** explains the Bethesda Urban District Fund and Bethesda Parking Lot District Fund, which fund BUP's contracts with the County; and

**Section D** discusses BUP's Arts and Entertainment District budget and BUP's status with regard to the County's Living Wage law.

### A. BUP's Expenditures

In FY18, BUP expended approximately \$5.0 million dollars in six general budget categories: (1) field operations; (2) marketing and special events; (3) transportation management; (4) internal operations; (5) arts and entertainment district funds; and (6) reserve for equipment replacements. Figure 4-1 below shows Field Operations, BUP's largest division, accounted for over 50% of BUP's FY18 expenditures.

**Figure 4-1: FY18 Bethesda Urban Partnership Expenditures by Category (Actual)**

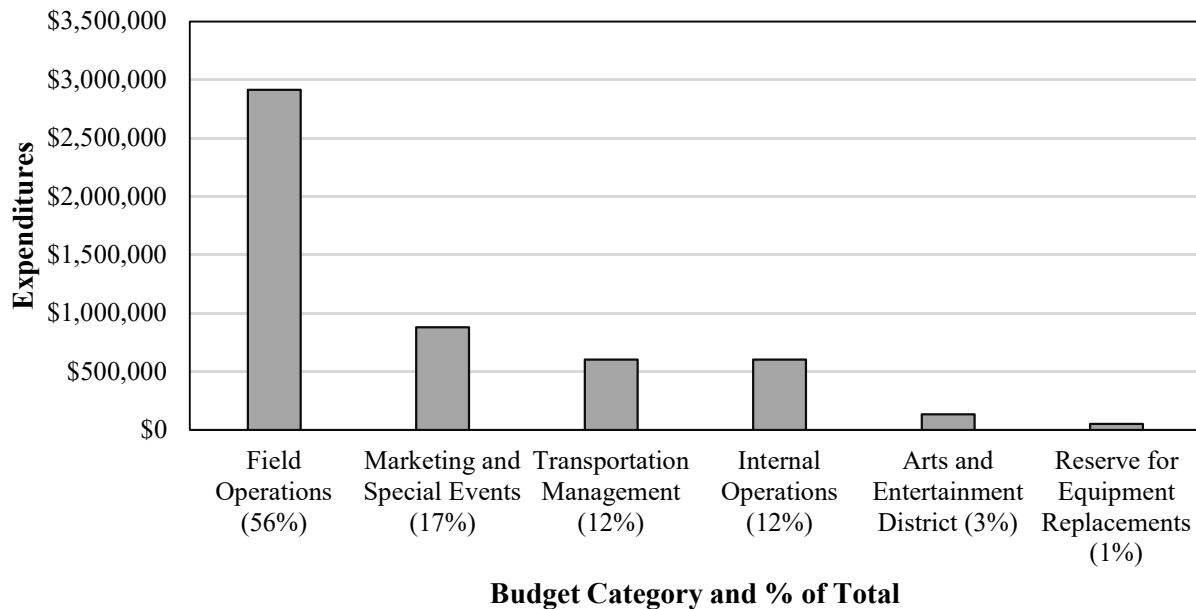


Table 4-1 summarizes BUP's five-year expenditure trends from FY14 through FY18 and provides detailed data for its three largest budget categories: Field Operations, Marketing and Special Events, and Transportation Management. Over the five-year period, BUP's total expenditures increased from approximately \$4.5 million to \$5.0 million. By budget category, the expenditure trends show:

- Field Operations' expenditures increased from approximately \$2.5 million to \$2.8 million, due to increased funding for the expansion of the Bethesda Circulator, the Ambassador program, and various maintenance activities;
- Marketing and Special Events' expenditures increased from approximately \$765,000 to \$797,000, due primarily to increased overhead expenses;
- Transportation Management's expenditures remained relatively flat, increasing from approximately \$562,000 to \$568,000; and
- Arts & Entertainment District's expenditures decreased from roughly \$155,000 to \$147,000.

**Table 4-1: Bethesda Urban Partnership Expenditures, FY14 – FY18 (Actuals, \$000s)**

Budget Category	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
<b>Field Operations - Total</b>	<b>\$2,452</b>	<b>\$2,547</b>	<b>\$2,621</b>	<b>\$2,787</b>	<b>\$2,843</b>
Overhead	\$886	\$915	\$928	\$899	\$889
Bethesda Circulator	\$826	\$842	\$906	\$1,088	\$1,100
Streetscape/Landscape Maintenance	\$410	\$448	\$406	\$409	\$400
Ambassador Program	\$170	\$171	\$181	\$196	\$226
Sidewalk Repairs and Maintenance	\$126	\$114	\$138	\$142	\$160
Tree Care and Special Maintenance Projects	\$33	\$56	\$63	\$52	\$68
<b>Marketing and Special Events - Total</b>	<b>\$765</b>	<b>\$806</b>	<b>\$763</b>	<b>\$858</b>	<b>\$797</b>
Overhead	\$405	\$449	\$481	\$483	\$474
Events	\$239	\$239	\$157	\$241	\$195
Communications	\$121	\$118	\$125	\$133	\$127
<b>Transportation Management - Total</b>	<b>\$562</b>	<b>\$580</b>	<b>\$564</b>	<b>\$542</b>	<b>\$568</b>
Overhead	\$522	\$538	\$533	\$501	\$533
Direct Services	\$40	\$42	\$30	\$42	\$36
<b>Internal Operations</b>	<b>\$518</b>	<b>\$557</b>	<b>\$581</b>	<b>\$648</b>	<b>\$601</b>
<b>Arts and Entertainment District</b>	<b>\$155</b>	<b>\$142</b>	<b>\$134</b>	<b>\$136</b>	<b>\$147</b>
<b>Reserve for Equipment Replacements</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$50</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,502</b>	<b>\$4,681</b>	<b>\$4,713</b>	<b>\$5,021</b>	<b>\$5,005</b>

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership Monthly Internal Financial Statements

## B. BUP's Revenues

BUP receives revenue from five County service contracts and four other non-County sources. Table 4-2 shows BUP collected approximately \$5.2 million in total revenue in FY18, including roughly \$4.8 million from County sources. The County Attorney has determined that BUP may retain funds it receives from non-County sources in a reserve account established for the replacement of capital assets.

**Table 4-2: Bethesda Urban Partnership Revenue by Type, FY14 – FY18 (Actuals, \$000s)**

BUP's Revenues	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
<b>Revenue from County Service Contracts</b>					
Bethesda Urban District*	\$3,474	\$3,607	\$3,760	\$3,983	\$3,998
Bethesda Transportation Management District	\$561	\$563	\$552	\$587	\$597
Streetsweeping in Wheaton and Silver Spring	\$44	\$44	\$48	\$49	\$49
Trash Removal in Wheaton and Silver Spring	\$118	\$117	\$118	\$118	\$118
Groundskeeping at Public Parking Lots and Garages	\$25	\$26	\$25	\$36	\$25
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$4,222</b>	<b>\$4,357</b>	<b>\$4,502</b>	<b>\$4,773</b>	<b>\$4,787</b>
<b>Non-County Revenue</b>					
Event Income/Sponsorship	\$225	\$229	\$153	\$238	\$277
Circulator Advertising	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30
Maintenance on State Roads	\$34	\$25	\$33	\$36	\$23
Miscellaneous	\$16	\$12	\$11	\$36	\$37
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$305</b>	<b>\$297</b>	<b>\$226</b>	<b>\$340</b>	<b>\$367</b>
<b>Total Projected Revenue</b>	<b>\$4,527</b>	<b>\$4,654</b>	<b>\$4,729</b>	<b>\$5,113</b>	<b>\$5,154</b>
County % of Total	93.3%	93.6%	95.2%	93.3%	92.9%
Non-County % of Total	6.7%	6.4%	4.8%	6.7%	7%

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership Monthly Internal Financial Statements

\* FY2015-FY2018 Bethesda Urban District contract amounts include additional funds for Circulator.

### 1. County Revenue from County Service Contracts

BUP receives County revenue via five contracts, including three contracts it has to provide services in Bethesda and two contracts it has to provide services in two other urban districts.

**BUP's Contract for Bethesda Urban District Services (including the Circulator).** BUP's largest source of revenue is its contract to provide services in the Bethesda Urban District. The Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center (BCC-RSC) administers this contract. In FY18, BUP's revenue from this contract was approximately \$2.9 million, in addition to \$1.1 million in funding provided for the Circulator. BUP uses revenue from this contract to fund BUP's Field Operations' services, e.g. maintenance and landscaping, Ask Me team activities and Marketing and Special Events' activities to promote Bethesda. The County's contract with BUP for Urban District services addresses the Circulator service but the Circulator's expenses are charged to the Mass Transit Fund.

The BCC-RSC makes payments on this contract from the Bethesda Urban District Fund. County revenue sources accounted for in this fund include urban district property taxes, optional method development maintenance charges, parking fees transferred from the Bethesda Parking Lot District Fund, and a transfer

from the County General Fund (See page 30 for more details about the fund and these resources). At the end of each fiscal year, the County must transfer any unspent money budgeted in the Urban District Fund for BUP's contract to the County General Fund.

The County's contract with BUP to provide Bethesda Urban District services specifies an annual funding allocation for the Bethesda Circulator. The contract permits BUP to raise additional revenue through the sale of advertising space on Circulator vehicles. BUP maintains this revenue in a separate reserve account since it must be used to cover operational expenses to fund or enhance the Circulator's services.

Table 4-3 displays financial data for the Circulator from FY14 through FY18, including the County's annual funding allocation and BUP's advertising revenue and marketing expenses. The data show:

- Over the five-year period, BUP's total operational expenses for the Circulator regularly exceeded the County's annual funding allocation.
- For the first three years (FY14 through FY16), the addition of \$30,000 in advertising revenue and the County's annual funding allocation yielded total revenues that covered operating expenses and yielded a year end net surplus.
- In FY17 and FY18, the County's annual funding allocation was level at \$1,054,591 and total revenues fell short of total operational expenses. This resulted in slight deficits in FY17 and FY18.

According to BUP, in FY17 operational expenses increased, in part, because the Circulator route was expanded at the request of the County. In FY18, operational expenses increased because BUP paid its contractor to provide a fourth BUP-branded Circulator bus for use as a backup in case one of its three existing buses becomes inoperable. In both years, BUP used funds from the reserve account to cover these deficits.

**Table 4-3: Bethesda Circulator Revenue and Expenses, FY14 – FY18 (Actuals)**

Circulator Contract	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
Annual Funding Allocation for the Circulator	\$808,476	\$829,081	\$888,551	\$1,054,591	\$1,054,591
Advertising Revenue	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$838,476</b>	<b>\$859,081</b>	<b>\$918,551</b>	<b>\$1,084,591</b>	<b>\$1,084,591</b>
Operational Expenses (Paid to Contractor)	\$824,170	\$828,995	\$891,511	\$1,061,583	\$1,096,514
Marketing/Additional Expenses	\$2,004	\$12,594	\$14,414	\$26,726	\$3,976
<b>Total Operational Expenses</b>	<b>\$826,174</b>	<b>\$841,589</b>	<b>\$905,925</b>	<b>\$1,088,309</b>	<b>\$1,100,490</b>
<b>Year-End Net Surplus</b>	<b>\$12,302</b>	<b>\$17,492</b>	<b>\$12,626</b>	<b>(\$3,718)</b>	<b>(\$15,899)</b>

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership

**BUP's Contract for Transportation Management District Services.** BUP has a contract to provide commuter services in the Bethesda Transportation Management District. Commuter Services' staff in the County DOT's Director's Office administers this contract. Revenues from this contract fund BUP's annual commuter surveys and its ride matching efforts to promote carpooling and vanpooling. In FY18, BUP's revenue from this contract was roughly \$597,000, accounting for 12% of BUP's County revenue.

Commuter Services makes payments on this contract from the Mass Transit Fund. In FY18, County revenue sources accounted for in the Mass Transit Fund include property taxes, service charges, and transportation management fees charged by the County on new and existing development.<sup>1</sup>

**BUP's Contracts for Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban District Services.** In FY18, BUP had two contracts with the County to provide services in the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts: a joint contract to perform street sweeping in both urban districts, and another joint contract to collect trash from the public trash cans located in both urban districts. In FY18, BUP's payments were based on a fixed rate per linear curb mile of street cleaned for the street sweeping contract and a fixed amount per receptacle for the trash collection contract.

In FY18, BUP's revenue from the trash removal contract was approximately \$118,000 and its revenue from the street sweeping contract was approximately \$49,000. Together, these contracts accounted for about 3% of BUP's County revenue. County staff report that, beginning in FY19, the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts have discontinued their contract with BUP for trash collection services, and have brought them in-house to save money.

**BUP's Service Contract with County DOT for Groundskeeping at Public Parking Lots and Garages.** BUP has a contract with the County DOT to provide groundskeeping services at public parking lots and garages in Bethesda. In FY18, this contract generated \$25,450 in revenue for BUP, accounting for less than 1% of BUP's County revenue. Payments for this contract are charged to the Bethesda PLD Fund.

## 2. Revenue from Non-County Sources

**Event income and sponsorships.** BUP earns revenue from events it manages through private sponsors, such as Taste of Bethesda, Imagination Bethesda, and the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival. Some events also raise income from event participants. Proceeds from these events accounted for 74% of BUP's non-County revenues in FY14 and 75% by FY18.

**Bethesda Circulator advertising.** Private businesses pay to have their logo on the Circulator bus and the Circulator's publicity materials. As shown in Table 4-3, BUP uses this revenue to fund Circulator operating costs that exceed the amount of County funding for this service, and for capital and maintenance costs like maintaining and purchasing bus stop benches and signage.

**Maintenance on State roads.** BUP has a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Highway Administration to provide maintenance services on State roads in "gateway areas." BUP and the State Highway Administration signed an extension to the MOU in March of 2013 and extended the MOU for an additional five years in the Fall of 2018.<sup>2</sup>

**Miscellaneous.** Miscellaneous revenue includes interest income and the contracts that BUP holds with other entities (Imagination Stage) to provide services.

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<sup>1</sup> Another County revenue source was parking fines transferred from the Bethesda PLD; however, the County discontinued transfers beginning in FY16 as part of a plan to improve the fiscal health of the PLDs.

<sup>2</sup> Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. Financial Statements and Management Discussion and Analysis for the Year Ended June 30, 2012, p. 5

## C. County Special District Funds

This section describes the County special district tax funds that support BUP: the Bethesda Urban District Fund, the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund, and the countywide Mass Transit Fund. The Urban District Fund and the Bethesda PLD Fund provide most of the revenue that BUP receives. Significantly, despite changes to County PLD Fund policies in FY16, parking fees transferred from the Bethesda PLD Fund are still the largest source of revenue for the Bethesda Urban District Fund.

### 1. Bethesda Urban District Fund

The Bethesda Urban District Fund accounts for the property taxes, service fees, and transfers from the County General Fund, the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund, and since FY15, the Mass Transit Fund, that fund BUP's service contract with the Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center. Table 4-4 shows changes in the Urban District Fund's revenues, transfers and spending for BUP's service contract from FY14 through FY18. The Fund's expenditures also account for BCC-RSC's urban district related expenses.

**Table 4-4: Bethesda Urban District Fund Resources and Expenditures, FY14 – FY18 (\$000s)**

	<b>FY14 Actual</b>	<b>FY15 Actual</b>	<b>FY16 Actual</b>	<b>FY17 Actual</b>	<b>FY18 Est.</b>
<b>Beginning Fund Balance</b>	\$365	\$119	\$-89	\$388	\$168
<b>Revenues and Transfers In</b>					
Urban District Property Tax	\$472	\$524	\$581	\$646	\$687
Transfer from Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD)	\$2,932	\$2,824	\$2,201	\$1,502	\$1,671
General Fund Transfer	0	0	\$650	\$650	\$650
OMD Maintenance Charges	\$156	\$139	\$150	\$178	\$190
To other funds	\$-20	\$-21	\$-22	\$-22	\$-24
Lot 31 Capital Improvements Program (enhanced circulator)	\$124	\$62	0	0	0
Transfer from the Mass Transit Fund (circulator)		\$889	\$889	\$1,055	\$1,093
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,664</b>	<b>\$3,528</b>	<b>\$4,449</b>	<b>\$3,842</b>	<b>\$4,229</b>
Total Appropriation/Expenditures	\$3,575	\$3,466	\$3,560	\$2,954	\$3,174
<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>\$3,940</b>	<b>\$3,585</b>	<b>\$3,471</b>	<b>\$3,342</b>	<b>\$3,342</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Urban District Services	\$2,640	\$2,778	\$3,022	\$2,929	\$2,943
Bethesda Circulator	\$808	\$767	\$889	\$889	\$1,055
<b>Total Contract</b>	<b>\$3,449</b>	<b>\$3,545</b>	<b>\$3,910</b>	<b>\$3,817</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>
Prior Year Adjustment/Reserves	\$295	\$104			
Other Adjustments	\$77	\$26	\$-827	\$-644	\$-839
<b>Total Use of Resources</b>	<b>\$3,821</b>	<b>\$3,675</b>	<b>\$3,083</b>	<b>\$3,173</b>	<b>\$3,161</b>
<b>Year-End Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$119</b>	<b>\$-89</b>	<b>\$388</b>	<b>\$168</b>	<b>\$180</b>

Sources: OLO and OMB and BCC-RSC. Schedule A-4 of the Approved Operating Budgets, FY14, FY15, FY16, FY17 and FY18.

\* In FY16, under the Countywide savings plan, the Bethesda Urban District's total contract amount was reduced by \$150,000.

**Revenue.** The Bethesda Urban District Fund accounts for revenues from the following County sources:

- a. Urban District Property Taxes.** The County Code authorizes the Council to levy a tax on all assessable real and personal property in the urban district, at a rate not to exceed 30 cents per \$100 of assessed value.<sup>3</sup> Since FY09, the tax rate in the Bethesda Urban District has been 1.2 cents per \$100 of assessed value for real property and 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value for personal property. From FY14 through FY18, revenues from this tax increased from \$471,953 to \$686,972.
- b. Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund Transfer.** County law allows the County Council to transfer revenue from Parking Lot District parking fees to the fund of any urban district from which the fees are collected. The amount of this transferred revenue must not exceed the number of parking spaces multiplied by the number of enforcement hours per year multiplied by 20 cents.<sup>4</sup>

In 2015, the County Executive and County Council made a set of structural changes to strengthen the long-term fiscal sustainability of the PLD funding system.<sup>5</sup> One change reduced the PLD Fund transfers to each Urban District, and a second change re-instated a transfer from the County General Fund to each Urban District to help offset the smaller PLD Fund transfer.<sup>6</sup>

As Table 4-4 shows, Bethesda PLD transfers to the Bethesda Urban District fell from nearly \$3.0 million in FY14 and FY15 to approximately \$2.2 million in FY16 and \$1.5 million in FY17. The PLD Fund transfer as a percentage of the Urban District appropriation declined from 82% in FY14 to 53% in FY18. Despite reductions over the five-year period, the PLD Fund is still the Bethesda Urban District Fund's largest revenue source.

- c. General Fund Transfers.** In FY06, the Council eliminated the General Fund transfer to the Bethesda Urban District and replaced it with funds transferred from the Bethesda PLD Fund. In FY16, following County Council and Executive actions to limit annual transfers from the Bethesda PLD Fund, the Council reinstated General Fund support for the Bethesda Urban District. The Council's FY16 budget approved a transfer of \$650,318 from the County's General Fund to the Bethesda Urban District Fund each year from FY16 – FY18.
- d. Maintenance Charges Paid by Optional Method Development Properties (OMD).** The County Code authorizes the County Executive to charge optional method developers for the cost of maintaining off-site amenities for that development.<sup>7</sup> BUP assesses a fee for each service provided to an optional method developer and submits an invoice to the County, which then charges the

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<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County Code § 68A-4(a)(1).

<sup>4</sup> Montgomery County Code § 68A-4(a)(2) and § 60-16(c).

<sup>5</sup> In January 2015, the County Council released OLO Report 2015-5: *Parking Lot District Fiscal Management and Budgeting*. The Council requested this report to address concerns with the fiscal health of the Bethesda PLD that Council staff had raised in 2014 and asked that OLO examine the long-term viability of the current parking lot district policies and practices. OLO found that the Bethesda PLD faced serious structural challenges that would cause the fund to fall into deficit unless corrective actions were taken. OLO recommended the County adopt a plan for long-term PLD fiscal stability and proposed four options, including one that limited PLD expenditures to parking related functions. In response, the County Executive proposed a sustainable revenue model that limited the use of PLD funds for non-parking functions, including the elimination of PLD transfers to the Mass Transit Fund and the reduction of PLD transfers to the Urban Districts. It also proposed corresponding adjustments to the Mass Transit property tax and restoring County General Fund support for the Urban Districts. The County Executive incorporated these changes in the FY16 Recommended Operating Budget and they were approved in the Council's FY16 Approved Operating Budget.

<sup>6</sup> The rationale for this General Fund support is that it reflects funding for a set of countywide baseline services that would be provided if the Urban District had not been established.

<sup>7</sup> County Code § 68A-1(h).



developers. BUP receives payment for these services through their contract with the County to manage the urban district.

- e. **Mass Transit Fund Transfer.** The Mass Transit Fund is a countywide special tax district funded with County revenues from a property tax, Ride-On fare revenue, bus advertising, and a transportation management fee charged to property owners. The Division of Transit Services in the County DOT administers the Mass Transit Fund. Beginning in FY15, a transfer from the Mass Transit Fund to the Urban District Fund has been used to pay for the Bethesda Circulator.

**Tax and Fee Requirement.** County law limits the relative proportion of urban district revenue that can come from either the urban district tax or the parking fee transfer. Specifically, the law states that neither the urban district tax nor the parking fees transferred into an urban district may exceed 90% of their combined total.<sup>8</sup> Table 4-5 shows that this requirement has been met. It also shows how the mix of these funding sources changed due to the smaller PLD Fund transfers. From FY14 through FY18, the contribution of the urban district tax to the total urban district tax and parking fee revenue increased from 14% to 29% with a corresponding decrease in the PLD Fund share from 86% to 71%.

**Table 4-5: Urban District Funding, Tax and Fee Requirement (\$000s)**

	<b>FY14 Actual</b>	<b>FY15 Actual</b>	<b>FY16 Actual</b>	<b>FY17 Actual</b>	<b>FY18 Estimated</b>
Urban District Tax	\$472	\$524	\$581	\$646	\$687
Parking Fees Transfer	\$2,932	\$2,824	\$2,201	\$1,502	\$1,671
<i>Total Tax and Fee</i>	\$3,404	\$3,348	\$2,782	\$2,148	\$2,358
<b>Tax as % of Total</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Parking Fee as % of Total</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>71%</b>

Source: Approved Operating Budgets, FY14, FY15, FY16, FY17 and FY18; Office of Management and Budget.

**Expenditures.** As shown in Table 4-4 (page 32), Bethesda Urban District Funds are used to fund the County's contract with BUP to manage the urban district including the costs of the Bethesda Circulator. In FY18, the Council appropriated approximately \$2.9 million (93% of expenditures) for BUP's service contract. The Fund also covers BCC-RSC expenses for the salary of an urban district manager who oversees the contract with BUP, costs to repair streetlight knockdowns, and other miscellaneous expenses for the urban district.

## **2. Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund**

The Bethesda Parking Lot District Fund is managed by the County DOT's Division of Parking Management. The Bethesda PLD Fund supports two of the contracts BUP has with the County to provide services in Bethesda: the urban district contract (through PLD transfers to the Urban District Fund) and the contract for groundskeeping at public lots and garages in Bethesda. The Bethesda PLD also funds the construction, operation, and maintenance of parking lots and garages in Bethesda. This section describes PLD revenue and expenditures.

**Revenue.** There are four primary revenue sources for the Bethesda Parking Lot District:

- **Parking fees** are collected in the Bethesda PLD from parking meters and parking permits. The Council sets parking fees by resolution as part of its approval of the annual operating budget.

<sup>8</sup> Montgomery County Code § 68A-4 (c).

- **Parking fines** are payments for non-moving violations, e.g., parking at an expired meter or in a no parking zone, within the Bethesda PLD. Parking fines are set in the same resolution that establishes parking fees.
- **Property taxes** are levied on commercial and non-commercial property in the PLD. The County Code also provides for a property tax exemption or reduction for certain properties based on their compliance with parking regulations in the Zoning Ordinance. Properties must apply to the County DOT for an exemption. The Council sets PLD property tax rates as part of the annual operating budget.<sup>9</sup> As explained in the previous section, the County zeroed out PLD property tax rates beginning in FY16 as part of a larger plan to strengthen the long-term fiscal health of the PLDs.
- **Miscellaneous Revenue** includes investment income or proceeds from the sale of land or a bond issue.

**Expenditures.** The County Code authorizes the use of PLD funds for activities related directly to parking, i.e., the construction, operation, and maintenance of parking lots and garages in the district where the revenue is generated. It also authorizes the use of parking fees to fund urban district services and transportation management activities.<sup>10</sup>

In the Bethesda PLD, the largest expenditures are for CIP projects and operating costs for parking lots and garages. For example, Bethesda PLD revenue funded CIP projects such as ongoing renovations in existing garages and contributed funding for new parking garages – such as the Capital Crescent Garage, which replaced Lot 31. This parking garage opened in January 2015.<sup>11</sup> PLD revenue also funded operating costs such as the ongoing maintenance and security of public parking lots and garages.

The remaining PLD expenditures include two transfers related to BUP. A transfer from the Bethesda PLD to the Bethesda Urban District funds BUP's contract with the County to provide Bethesda Urban District services and other expenses such as BCC-RSC's costs of administering the BUP contract. As discussed earlier, the County reduced the amount of these PLD transfers beginning in FY16.

In FY14 and FY15, there was a second BUP-related PLD transfer to the Mass Transit Fund that funded BUP's contract with the County DOT to provide Bethesda TMD services and County DOT's contract administration costs. As mentioned previously, Bethesda PLD Fund transfers to the Mass Transit Fund ended in FY15. Beginning in FY16, Bethesda TMD expenses were funded directly from the countywide Mass Transit Fund.

## **D. Related Issues**

### **1. Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District**

BUP manages Bethesda's Arts and Entertainment District. The direct costs of Arts and Entertainment District events are primarily funded by BUP's marketing budget, private contributions, and event income. Prior to FY10, BUP reported all Arts and Entertainment District revenues and expenditures separately from other BUP expenditures in its audited financial statements. Since FY10, based on a determination of the County Attorney, event revenue generated and expenditures paid from the BUP marketing budget are

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<sup>9</sup> Chapter 60 of the County Code.

<sup>10</sup> Montgomery County Code § 60-16

<sup>11</sup> <https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/news/moco-hopes-1250-space-garage-quells-bethesda-parking-concerns/>

incorporated directly in the annual BUP audit, with some exceptions.<sup>12</sup> Private contributions and other direct monies to the Arts and Entertainment District and expenditures made directly from the Arts and Entertainment District bank account are no longer included in BUP's annual audit.

## 2. Living Wage

In 2002, the Council adopted the Living Wage Law, which requires certain contractors and their subcontractors to pay a certain level of wages – known as a “living wage” – to employees who perform work on County service contracts.<sup>13</sup> By executive order, Montgomery County as an employer must also pay the living wage to its merit system employees.<sup>14</sup> The Chief Administrative Officer adjusts the wage rate annually based on changes in the cost of living, as measured by the U.S. Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index.

County staff report that the County Attorney has determined that BUP is not legally required to pay the living wage because the County has an agreement with BUP to manage the Bethesda Urban District instead of a contract. The County Attorney has not issued a formal opinion on the matter.

County staff reported that, in the summer of 2013, the County adjusted BUP's budget to pay BUP employees the FY14 living wage rate. According to BUP staff, roughly a half-dozen employees began receiving the Living Wage rate, with incremental upward pay adjustments for employees above their pay grade. Going forward, the Bethesda Chevy-Chase Regional Services Center will notify BUP of living wage rate changes, and BUP's budget request will include an adjustment for those changes. Effective July 1, 2018, the required hourly wage rate is \$14.75.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> BUP staff report that event revenue for some marketing events are not incorporated in BUP's annual audit, depending on the specifics of their contract.

<sup>13</sup> County Code § 11B-33A

<sup>14</sup> Executive Order 91-03, effective date July 1, 2003

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR/compensation/Compensation.html>

## Chapter V. Feedback from County Government, Patrons, Business Owners, and Community Representatives

The Bethesda Urban Partnership interacts regularly with several agencies and community organizations listed in Table 5-1. This chapter provides feedback on BUP's performance from these agencies and others who benefit directly or indirectly from the services BUP provides. It is organized as follows:

- **Section A** summarizes feedback from staff in the County government, the Planning Department and other community organizations;
- **Section B** summarizes feedback about visitors' awareness of BUP's ambassador program including individuals' experiences with members of the "Ask Me Team;"
- **Section C** summarizes feedback from Bethesda property managers and other members of the business community; and
- **Section D** presents comments on BUP's performance based on a consultant's summary of highlights from focus groups it conducted for BUP.

**Table 5-1. BUP's Relationships with Government and Community Organizations**

Agency/Organization	Nature of Relationship
Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center	Administers contract with BUP to manage the urban district and the Bethesda Circulator. The director serves as an ex officio member of BUP's Board of Directors.
Mid-County and Silver Spring Regional Services Centers	Administer contracts with BUP for trash removal and street sweeping in the Wheaton Urban District and street sweeping in the Silver Spring Urban District.
Montgomery County Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administers contract with BUP to manage the Bethesda Transportation Management District.</li> <li>• Administers contract with BUP for grounds keeping services for County parking lots and garages in the Bethesda Parking Lot District.</li> <li>• Provides materials to BUP staff for pothole repair and solicits BUP's assistance in monitoring road issues in Bethesda.</li> <li>• Receives crosswalk condition assessments and monthly reports on streetlight outages from BUP and coordinates with BUP to manage street closures for events.</li> </ul>
Montgomery County Police Department, District 2 Station	Coordinates with BUP to manage street closures and other event logistics, has designated BUP offices as an alternative command center, communicates and coordinates with BUP regarding safety issues.
Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Battalion	Coordinates with BUP on emergency preparedness and ongoing safety issues.
Montgomery County Planning Department	Coordinates with BUP on projects in Bethesda that have a public element and obtains input from BUP for the Bethesda Central Business District Master Plan.
Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce	Works with BUP to address issues that arise in downtown Bethesda that have an impact on businesses.
Transportation Management District Advisory Committee	Advises BUP on activities related to transportation management. Appointed by BUP's Board of Directors.
Arts and Entertainment District Board of Directors	Advises BUP on activities related to the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District. Appointed by BUP's Board of Directors.
Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation	Sponsors the Bethesda Literary Festival; Carol Trawick also provides funding for the Trawick Prize and the Painting Awards.
Bethesda Cares	Coordinates with BUP regarding homelessness issues that arise.
Bethesda Green	Promotes sustainability initiatives in Bethesda and provided recycling bins for public right-of-way in Bethesda that BUP currently empties.

## **A. OLO Interviews with Representatives from County Government Departments, County Agencies, and Community Organizations**

OLO interviewed staff from the County Government and other organizations listed in Table 5-1 to elicit feedback on BUP's performance. Appendix D provides a list of specific individuals interviewed. Overall, interviewees shared positive comments about the professionalism of BUP's staff and the high quality of BUP's services. This section summarizes themes from their feedback.

**Quality of services.** Most interviewees reported that BUP delivers very high-quality services and say they are satisfied with BUP's work. County staff who administer BUP's contracts reported that BUP consistently meets its contract requirements. Many highlighted BUP senior management's high level of expertise in urban district management, and several suggested that BUP could offer its expertise as a model of best practices for other regions. All interviewees reported their interactions with BUP staff were positive.

**Coordination with County Government.** Most County partners reported they have a positive working relationship with BUP. One reported that BUP serves as an invaluable "conduit" between the government and the public for addressing issues and solving problems. Another noted that BUP's organizational structure keeps them "locally-focused" on Bethesda's interests.

Public safety representatives reported they work closely with BUP management and staff to address street level safety and security issues. They noted that BUP staff have a deep base of "institutional knowledge" that allows them to anticipate service needs and provide assistance, often without being asked. For example, BUP staff routinely secure loose objects and clear storm drains before major rainstorms. County staff value the assistance BUP provides for their work in Bethesda. Some examples include BUP's efforts to inform the business community of DOT's changes to parking rules or lane markings, and BUP's willingness to serve as the Department of Permitting Services' "eyes and ears" on the street to monitor and resolve code enforcement issues.

**BUP's Responsibilities.** When asked whether BUP should do more than they already do, most interviewees indicated that they feel BUP's current responsibilities are appropriate. Several interviewees noted that they expect BUP's workload will increase as more residents, workers and visitors arrive as projects proposed in the new Bethesda Downtown Plan and the Purple Line come online. Another noted that as Bethesda continues to grow, residents, developers, and investors will need BUP to serve as a "binding agent."

When pressed for ideas about how BUP could improve, interviewees suggested that BUP could increase its efforts to collaborate with private developers and property owners to jointly fund and promote special events; BUP could cooperate more closely with relevant County and State agencies to respond more efficiently to streetscape maintenance needs; and BUP could work to develop more innovative methods of marketing its transportation management services.

## **B. Results from OLO's Survey of BUP's Ambassador Program and the "Ask Me Team"**

OLO designed and administered a survey of Bethesda residents and visitors to gauge public awareness and use of BUP's ambassador program and to solicit people's views about the "Ask Me Team." BUP's ambassador program offers two ways for people to access information and assistance: BUP has placed information kiosks at three busy locations in the downtown area and five BUP "Ask Me Team" staff are assigned to patrol the surrounding areas where they are available to answer questions and provide assistance. Team members provide directions; they help people navigate public transportation; they help people find parking and, if asked, will escort people to parking facilities; and they can administer emergency first aid.

**Survey Administration and Results.** OLO wanted to gauge public knowledge of the kiosks and/or the Ask Me Team, and how the public would rate their experience. OLO staff administered a survey over several days at locations near the three “Ask Me” kiosks to increase the chances of surveying individuals who had used the kiosks. OLO spoke with 64 individuals. Comments from individuals who had used BUP’s Ambassador Program services were extremely positive. Of note:

- Half of the people OLO surveyed were aware of either the kiosks or the Ask Me Team services.
- Of the 32 people who knew about BUP’s Ambassador program, everyone knew about the kiosks and 20 people were also aware of the Ask Me Team services.
- 6 people had used the kiosks, either with the Ask Me Team services (5) or just the kiosk (1). Of this group, everyone gave the kiosks a five out of five rating.
- 6 people had used the Ask Me Team services, either with the kiosks (5) or just the Ask Me Team services (1). All of them gave the Ask Me Team’s services a five out of five rating for ability to assist, usefulness, and overall experience.

### **C. In-Person Interviews with Downtown Business Owners, Managers, and Related Individuals**

The Bethesda Urban Partnership provides services to businesses, restaurants, and other establishments in downtown Bethesda, regularly interacting with managers and owners to address questions and resolve potential issues. (These business relationships are distinct from those BUP maintains with County agency staff and community representatives).

OLO conducted field interviews over several weeks in the summer of 2018 with 35 individual business owners, business managers, and other proprietors who interact directly with BUP or benefit from BUP’s services. OLO asked businesses to share details of their experiences with BUP, including whether they were satisfied with BUP’s maintenance and marketing services and whether they had any specific concerns or suggestions.

**BUP’s Delivery of Landscaping, Maintenance and Security Services.** Most interviewees reported satisfaction with BUP’s delivery of services; 21 interviewees were familiar with BUP’s slate of services and 13 of these individuals shared positive comments about BUP’s work.

Several businesses OLO spoke with had contacted BUP for assistance with landscaping needs, tree trimming, and other maintenance work near their places of business. Most reported positive experiences and satisfactory outcomes in their interactions with BUP staff. For example, a business owner said BUP is “generally proactive” about performing landscaping and maintenance work and a restaurant manager said that BUP “maintains the security of our building” through their use of security patrols. A business owner in Woodmont Triangle suggested that BUP could provide increased monitoring of “public safety issues,” particularly regarding bars and nightlife-oriented street traffic.

**Perceptions of How BUP Communicates with Businesses.** Of the 35 interviewees, 18 were satisfied with how BUP communicated with them. One interviewee said BUP has a “proactive approach” to informing businesses about work that may involve closing or temporarily amending their storefront space. Another noted that BUP staff provides notifications about upcoming construction work “well in advance.” One individual said they had temporary difficulties with access to their building when scheduled construction work took place nearby, but they appreciated that they were notified about this work in advance.

**Marketing Communications.** Most interviewees said they were satisfied with the promotional and marketing information they receive from BUP; one business owner said BUP's information kiosks are useful to the community. A small number of interviewees shared specific complaints about services they had requested through BUP. For example, one said they had difficulty getting BUP's help with their request to be included in promotional materials for one of BUP's special events. Another said he attended a BUP strategy session to discuss ways to increase downtown business but felt BUP "didn't have a strong focus" on where and how to market.

Individuals also provided suggestions for improving BUP's communication and advertising. A restaurant manager suggested "family businesses need advertising [more] than larger ones" and another business owner suggested "locally-owned businesses in Bethesda need more support."

**Participation in BUP Special Events.** Of the 35 interviewees, approximately a third reported they had participated in one or more of the special events that BUP had organized, including the Taste of Bethesda, the Arts Fest, and the summer concert series. Of these, 11 said their participation was beneficial to their business and they planned to continue to do so. Interviewees shared many other positive comments, observing, for example, that special events organized by BUP "help to bring people to downtown" or that BUP "makes it very easy for us" to participate in their events.

A small number of interviewees who participated in BUP's special events had more mixed experiences. Several restaurants reported they had lost money through their participation in the Taste of Bethesda, the film fest, and other events. As a result, they were unsure if they would participate again. Several interviewees observed that, because the big events BUP puts on downtown typically require street closures, they can reduce foot traffic to their establishments and "kill business." When asked about potential ideas for improving or expanding BUP's special events, interviewees suggested BUP should consider hosting "smaller-scale" artist workshops and events to support local-level artists.

#### **D. Stakeholder Group Discussion Results**

As part of its strategic planning process, BUP hired the Alineo Group, Inc. to organize and facilitate seven focus groups to solicit perceptions about BUP's performance. The consultant held the focus groups during the Spring and Summer of 2017.

Each group had six to ten participants, and collectively their views represented the broad array of individuals who interact with BUP. Specifically, the consultant designed the seven focus groups to solicit views from: residents of Bethesda; employers in downtown Bethesda; retailers and restaurants in downtown Bethesda; visitors to downtown Bethesda; developers of commercial, residential or mixed-use properties; Marriott employees; and County department staff who regularly interact with BUP.

BUP staff shared the memorandum that the consultant prepared for the BUP Board of Directors with OLO. This memorandum is the basis for the focus group feedback about BUP's performance and BUP's responsibilities.

**BUP's performance and quality of services.** The consultant's focus group feedback indicated that participants had a consistently high regard for BUP, its staff, and their knowledge of the Bethesda community. Focus groups provided positive comments about BUP's ability to advertise and promote its upcoming events, BUP's role in maintaining the downtown environment and streetscape, and BUP's productive relationship and proactive communication with the County. Several participants in the Marriott

employee group were familiar with BUP and its services, considered their staff useful, and noted that they received a large amount of information about activities and events from BUP's newsletter.

**BUP's responsibilities.** The consultant's focus group discussions indicated that most participants view BUP primarily as an information resource, a service provider and an organizer of community events. Of all the groups, the focus group of County staff had the clearest understanding of the full range of BUP's services.

Participants in the focus groups convened by the consultant identified several areas for BUP to improve their services. Non-County groups noted that BUP could communicate more proactively about issues such as upcoming construction-related street closure needs to reduce disruption of traffic. Other participants argued that BUP could play a more involved role in helping to attract and retain retail locations and maintaining a supportive environment for small businesses.



## CHAPTER VI. Findings

Chapter 68A of the County Code authorizes the County to establish urban district corporations to provide services within the County's urban districts. By law, an urban district corporation exists for five years and can be extended for an unlimited number of additional five-year terms by a resolution adopted by the County Council and approved by the County Executive. Before the Council renews the corporation's term, the law requires the Office of Legislative Oversight to conduct a performance evaluation.

The County Council established the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) in 1993 as the urban district corporation for the Bethesda Urban District. Since BUP's establishment, the Council has reauthorized BUP four times, most recently in December 2013. BUP's current five-year term ends on January 31, 2019.

This chapter presents findings from OLO's evaluation of BUP:

**Section A** provides OLO's findings related to BUP's responsibilities; and

**Section B** presents OLO's findings related to BUP's finances.

### A. RESPONSIBILITIES

**Finding #1: The Bethesda Urban Partnership's responsibilities were mostly unchanged for its fifth term (from January 2014 through December 2018.) The only major change is that, as of July 2018, BUP no longer provides trash collection in the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts.**

The statutes, governing documents, and contracts listed in the table below define BUP's responsibilities. Since December 2013, there have been no major changes or additions to the law or BUP's governing documents. The County Government's contracts with BUP generally stayed in force throughout BUP's fifth term. The one exception is the contract with BUP to provide trash collection services in the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts. The Silver Spring Urban District cut back its service to weekends only beginning in FY16. At the end of FY18, the urban district managers in both districts let the BUP contracts expire and brought services in-house to save money. BUP's contract to provide street sweeping services in both districts was in effect for its fifth term and remains in force in FY19.

#### Statutes, Other Governing Documents and Contracts that Define BUP's Responsibilities

Statutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Maryland, Commercial District Management Authorities</li> <li>• Montgomery County Code Chapter 68A, Urban Districts</li> <li>• County Code Chapter 42A, Ridesharing and Transportation Management</li> </ul>
Governing Documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolution 14-56, Establishment of a Transportation Management District in Bethesda</li> <li>• 1994 Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan</li> <li>• Bethesda Urban Partnership Articles of Incorporation</li> </ul>
County Government Contracts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement to manage the Bethesda Urban District, including the Bethesda Circulator</li> <li>• Contract to manage the Bethesda Transportation Management District</li> <li>• Contracts for Street Sweeping and Trash Collection in the Wheaton Urban District and Street Sweeping in the Silver Spring Urban District</li> <li>• Contract for Grounds keeping at Public Parking Lots and Garages in Bethesda</li> </ul>

BUP's major areas of responsibility continue to be to:

- Maintain and enhance streetscape amenities;
- Program public interest activities, including promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities;
- Advance the business and residential environment and sense of community;
- Enhance safety and security in public areas;
- Provide specialized transportation services; and
- Increase the number of people using alternative modes of transportation.

**Finding #2: During its fifth term, the Bethesda Urban Partnership maintained the frequency of its maintenance responsibilities, increased its marketing and special events, met a 38% increase in monthly Circulator ridership, and saw a threefold increase in Ask Me assistance to the homeless. BUP's employee complement was virtually unchanged.**

BUP provides services in six key areas to achieve the organization's purposes defined in the law, governing documents, and County Government contracts. The table on the next page provides examples of BUP's services in each of these areas. Of note, during its fifth, five-year term, BUP:

- Maintained the frequency of its maintenance and landscaping services while adding maintenance services for 12 new optional method development properties; and
- Expanded its offerings for promotional and special events through the opening of Studio B, a low-cost studio space for artists, the creation of new public art murals and the initiation of an annual "Yappy Hour" event.

BUP also met increases in demands for its services as they emerged. For example, over the five-year period, the Bethesda Circulator saw a 38% increase in its average monthly ridership (from about 25,000 to 34,560) and the Ask Me Team saw a threefold increase in requests for help from the homeless. Specifically, Ask Me requests for assistance increased from 311 in 2016 to 949 in 2018.

Over the five-year period, BUP's employee complement was virtually unchanged. BUP had 32 full-time and three part-time positions in FY14, compared to 30 full-time and one part-time positions in FY18.

Responsibility	Examples
<b>Maintaining and enhancing streetscape amenities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance and landscaping (including trash/recycling collection, tree maintenance, snow removal, and street sweeping) of Bethesda public rights-of-way, public parking structures, and highway medians</li> <li>• Maintenance of pedestrian tunnel next to the Bethesda Metro Station</li> <li>• Trash collection and street sweeping in Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts</li> </ul>
<b>Programming public interest activities, including promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of website, conducting media outreach, and publishing written advertising materials</li> <li>• Organization of special promotional events such as Taste of Bethesda, Imagination Bethesda, and Winter Wonderland</li> <li>• Promotion and management of cultural activities and events such as Gallery B, Studio B, and dance festivals</li> </ul>
<b>Advancing the business and residential environment and sense of community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing of assistance to Bethesda visitors through the Ask Me Team</li> <li>• Communicating with appropriate agencies about emergency maintenance, safety, or cleanliness issues</li> <li>• Participation in the Bethesda Metro Improvement Task Force</li> </ul>
<b>Enhancing safety and security in public areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with County Police and Fire/Rescue Service to improve safety and security</li> <li>• Serving as alternative command center for the Bethesda police station in an emergency</li> </ul>
<b>Providing specialized transportation services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of the free downtown Bethesda Circulator</li> </ul>
<b>Increasing the number of people using alternative modes of transportation for commuting to Bethesda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists with the development of traffic mitigation plans for employers</li> <li>• Marketing of alternative transportation options such as public transit, carpools, and vanpools to employers and employees in downtown Bethesda</li> <li>• Completion of an annual survey of employees to monitor changes in transportation use</li> </ul>

**Finding #3: County staff’s feedback about BUP’s staff and its services was positive.**

BUP works closely with various County staff, serving as their eyes on the street to keep them informed of service needs in downtown Bethesda. OLO solicited feedback on BUP’s interactions with staff through interviews and a review of focus groups conducted by the Alineo Group, Inc.

All staff who OLO interviewed reported satisfaction with BUP’s work. Most agreed that BUP delivers very high-quality services and effectively communicates and collaborates with its partners. Many referenced BUP’s high level of expertise in urban district management and its ability to anticipate and prepare for service needs in advance, and several emphasized the role of BUP’s senior management in ensuring efficient and effective service delivery.

According to the Alineo Group, members of the County staff focus group were the most familiar with the scope of BUP's responsibilities. Feedback from this group showed a high regard for BUP, its staff, and their role in the Bethesda community. County staff reported that BUP communicates with them effectively, is knowledgeable about the Bethesda area, and serves as a valuable liaison between the County and the Bethesda community.

**Finding #4: Most businesses interviewed by OLO report that they benefit from BUP's services. Businesses' assessments of BUP's maintenance services were largely positive, while views about BUP's marketing and special events were mixed.**

OLO interviewed 35 business owners and managers in the downtown Bethesda area who regularly interact with or receive services from BUP. Most interviewees reported satisfaction with BUP's delivery of services, and several provided specific positive comments about their completion of landscaping, tree trimming, and other maintenance work. Most interviewees also shared positive comments about BUP's proactive communication regarding upcoming disruptions in service delivery or transportation access due to construction work.

However, a small number of interviewees who spoke with OLO also shared criticisms about some aspects of BUP's marketing and communication with businesses. Some interviewees expressed difficulty with BUP fulfilling requests to be included in BUP's promotional materials for upcoming special events, while others who participated in business strategy sessions with BUP expressed concerns about the effectiveness of their marketing efforts. One suggested that BUP should do more to promote locally- and family-owned businesses in its marketing materials.

Most interviewees who participated in special events organized by BUP, such as the Taste of Bethesda, reported that doing so was beneficial to their business, and that BUP's planning and assistance made it easier for them to participate. A small number of individuals reported having lost money through participating in previous events or expressed frustration that the street closures required for such events reduce foot traffic to their business. One business owner suggested hosting smaller events to attract a more diverse range of interests, such as local artist workshops.

**Finding #5: Residents and visitors who were aware of BUP's Ambassador Program had positive views of the Ask Me Team's information kiosks and services.**

BUP's Ambassador Program provides information, directions, and other types of assistance to residents, workers and visitors to downtown Bethesda. The Program consists of a team of five "Ask Me" team staff and three information kiosks.

OLO surveyed 64 individuals who were in the vicinity of BUP's information kiosks and/or Ask Me Team staff to determine how many people knew about or had used BUP's Ambassador Program services. Those surveyed were either residents, workers, or visitors to Bethesda. Half of the individuals were aware of the informational kiosks, and, of this group, 20 were also aware of the Ask Me Team's services.

Of the seven individuals that had used the services, one had used only the kiosk, one had used only the team services and five had used both. All seven gave the Ask Me Team a five out of five rating for ability to assist, usefulness, and overall experience.

**B. FINANCES**

**Finding #6: BUP's expenditures were \$5.0 million in FY18, compared to \$4.5 million in FY14.**

In FY18, BUP's expenditures were just over \$5.0 million, compared to approximately \$4.5 million from FY14, as shown in the table below. Approximately half of this increase (\$250,000) was from increased funding of the Bethesda Circulator route. For each year, BUP's largest expenditure categories were field operations and marketing and special events.

**Bethesda Urban Partnership Expenditures, FY14 – FY18 (Actuals, \$000s)**

	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>
Field Operations and Bethesda Circulator	\$2,452	\$2,547	\$2,621	\$2,787	\$2,843
Marketing and Special Events	\$765	\$806	\$763	\$858	\$797
Transportation Management	\$562	\$580	\$564	\$542	\$568
Internal Operations	\$518	\$557	\$581	\$648	\$601
Arts and Entertainment District	\$155	\$142	\$134	\$136	\$147
Reserve for Equipment Replacements	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,502</b>	<b>\$4,681</b>	<b>\$4,713</b>	<b>\$5,021</b>	<b>\$5,005</b>

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership Monthly Internal Financial Statements

**Finding #7: In FY18, nearly \$4.8 million or 93% of BUP's revenue was from the five service contracts it has with the County. BUP's \$4.0 million contract to provide Bethesda Urban District services accounts for 84% of its County revenue.**

In FY18, BUP received 93% of its revenues from the County Government via five contracts to provide specific services in Bethesda and other urban districts. Seven percent of its revenues came from non-County sources including event income and sponsorships, Bethesda Circulator advertising, and contracts with non-County entities to provide maintenance services.

**Bethesda Urban Partnership Revenue by Type, FY14 – FY18 (Actuals, \$000s)**

	<b>FY14</b>	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>
County Revenue	\$4,222	\$4,357	\$4,502	\$4,773	\$4,787
Non-County Revenue	\$305	\$297	\$226	\$340	\$367
<b>Total BUP Revenue</b>	<b>\$4,527</b>	<b>\$4,654</b>	<b>\$4,729</b>	<b>\$5,113</b>	<b>\$5,154</b>
County % of Total	93.3%	93.6%	95.2%	93.3%	92.9%

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership Monthly Internal Financial Statements

BUP's contract with the County to manage the Bethesda Urban District provided \$4.0 million in revenues in FY18, which represents the majority (84%) of revenues from the County.

**Finding #8: In FY18, Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) funds were the largest revenue source for the Bethesda Urban District Fund, followed by Mass Transit funds for the Circulator. In FY16, a General Fund transfer was re-instated to fund urban district baseline services.**

The Bethesda Urban District Fund is a tax-supported fund that accounts for the revenues that pay for services in downtown Bethesda, including BUP's service contract with the Bethesda Chevy Chase-Regional Service Center. This agreement covers BUP's maintenance and promotion services in Bethesda and BUP's costs to operate the Bethesda Circulator.

During BUP's previous five-year term, the Fund's primary sources of revenue for BUP's service contract were transfers from the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD), an ad valorem tax assessed on properties in the urban district, and maintenance charges paid by optional method developers.

In FY18, revenues for the Bethesda Urban District Fund included: a transfer of nearly \$1.7 million from the Bethesda PLD; a transfer of just under \$1.1 million from the Mass Transit Fund; approximately \$687,000 in revenues from the Urban District Tax; a transfer of \$650,000 from the County's General Fund; and approximately \$190,000 from charges paid by optional method developers.

**Bethesda Urban District Fund Revenues, FY14 – FY18 (\$000s)**

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18
<b>Beginning Fund Balance</b>	\$365	\$119	\$-89	\$388	\$168
<b>Revenues and Transfers In</b>					
Urban District Tax	\$472	\$524	\$581	\$646	\$687
OMD Maintenance Charges	\$156	\$139	\$150	\$178	\$190
General Fund Transfer In	--	--	\$650	\$650	\$650
Transfer Out to the General Fund (Overhead)	\$-20	\$-21	\$-22	\$-22	\$-24
Bethesda Parking District (PLD) Fund Transfer	\$2,932	\$2,824	\$2,201	\$1,502	\$1,671
Lot 31 Capital Improvements Program (enhanced)	\$124	\$62			
Mass Transit Fund (circulator)		\$889	\$889	\$1,055	\$1,093
Total Appropriation/Expenditure	\$3,575	\$3,466	\$3,560	\$2,954	\$3,174
<b>Total Use of Resources</b>	<b>\$3,940</b>	<b>\$3,585</b>	<b>\$3,471</b>	<b>\$3,342</b>	<b>\$3,342</b>

Sources: OLO and OMB and BCC-RSC. Schedule A-4 of the Approved Operating Budgets, FY14, FY15, FY16, FY17 and FY18

In 2015, the County Executive and County Council made a set of structural changes to strengthen the long-term fiscal sustainability of the PLD funding system. One change reduced the PLD Fund transfers to each Urban District. In Bethesda, PLD transfers to the Urban District Fund fell from nearly \$3.0 million in FY14 and FY15 to \$2.2 million in FY16 and \$1.5 million in FY17.

A second change re-instated a transfer from the County General Fund. This General Fund support reflects funding for a set of countywide baseline services that the County would otherwise pay for if urban districts had not been established.

## CHAPTER VII. Recommendations

This chapter presents the Office of Legislative Oversight's recommendations for Council action and discussion related to the Bethesda Urban Partnership. Overall, OLO recommends that the Council:

- Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for another five-year term,
- Require BUP to develop a new strategic plan before their next authorization.

### **Recommendation #1: Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for another five-year term and retain the requirement for an OLO evaluation prior to its next reauthorization.**

OLO recommends that the Council adopt a resolution to reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. for another five-year term. OLO's review confirmed that BUP's activities continue to fulfill the purposes of the organization as described by State and County law, the 1994 Bethesda Central Business District's Sector Plan, the 2006 Woodmont Triangle Amendment, the new 2017 Bethesda Downtown Plan, and BUP's own Articles of Incorporation.

OLO found that BUP's partners in the County Government and the Bethesda community are satisfied with the quality of BUP's work. Representatives from the County expressed positive comments about the services that BUP provides, reporting that BUP communicates with them effectively, is knowledgeable about the Bethesda area, and serves as a valuable liaison between the County and the Bethesda community.

### **Recommendation #2: Require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before their next reauthorization.**

OLO recommends that the Council require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before their next reauthorization. BUP should continue to seek input from its constituents, including County departments, developers, business owners, employers, residents, and visitors to Bethesda at the beginning of the strategic planning process through surveys or facilitated group discussions.

OLO also suggests that BUP should continue to include a status report on implementing objectives identified in the previous strategic plan. This action would assist the Council in evaluating BUP's performance in the years since and understanding how the new plan differs from the previous one.

## **CHAPTER VIII.      Agency Comments**

The Office of Legislative Oversight circulated a draft of this report to the Chief Administrative Officer for Montgomery County and to the Board of Directors of the Bethesda Urban Partnership. OLO greatly appreciates the time taken by County Government and BUP representatives to review the draft report and provide comments. OLO's final report incorporates technical corrections provided by County and BUP staff.

The written comments received from the BUP Board of Directors are included in their entirety, beginning on the following page.





## Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.

*Business, Residents & Government Working For a Better Bethesda*

Robert Donohoe, Jr., Chair  
*Optional Method Developer  
Representative*

Deborah Michaels, Vice Chair  
*Residential Representative from  
Close Proximity to Urban District*

Jane Fairweather, Secretary  
*Small Business Representative*

Gregory Rooney, Treasurer  
*Optional Method Developer  
Representative*

Jack Alexander  
*The Greater Bethesda Chamber of  
Commerce Representative*

Kenneth B. Hartman  
*Ex-Officio: Non-voting  
County Executive Representative*

Elaine Joost  
*Residential Representative  
within Urban District*

Patrick O'Neil  
*The Greater Bethesda Chamber of  
Commerce Representative*

Andrew Jones  
*Optional Method Developer  
Representative*

Samir Paul  
*Western Montgomery County Citizens  
Advisory Board Representative*

Sarah Wolek  
*Residential Representative  
from Planning Area*

December 5, 2018

Chris Cihlar, Ph.D., Director  
Office of Legislative Oversight  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Dr. Cihlar,

The Board of Directors of the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) has reviewed the draft of the OLO Report for 2018. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the technical aspects of the report and your acceptance of these comments. The findings in the report reflect what the Board considers the strength of our organization, a deep commitment to providing the highest quality services to the Downtown Bethesda community.

The next five years will be an exciting time for Bethesda as we anticipate the completion of the Purple Line, the arrival of Marriott International Headquarters, thousands of new residents, and over two million square feet of new office space. We believe BUP is strongly positioned to work with our County and community stakeholders to navigate this time of transition and to ensure that Bethesda continues to be an incredible place to raise a family, open a business, and enjoy a diverse offering of cultural and entertainment amenities.

The BUP Board again wishes to thank the Office of Legislative Oversight for their efforts in producing this, the OLO's fifth recommendation for reauthorization. We greatly value your time and effort in reviewing our Strategic Plan, talking to key constituents and thoroughly reviewing our efforts in downtown Bethesda. It is the goal of our Board and staff to continue to provide downtown Bethesda with the highest quality maintenance, marketing and transportation management services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R Donohoe Jr", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Robert Donohoe, Jr.  
Chair

7700 Old Georgetown Road  
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

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301-215-6664 Fax

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## **List of Appendices**

### **Office of Legislative Oversight Report 2018-12 2018 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Begins on</b>
A	February 8, 1995 memorandum from Asst. County Attorney Melnick	@1
B	Bethesda Circulator Map	@3
C	2019-2014 Bethesda Urban Partnership Strategic Plan and Attachments	@4
D	List of OLO Interviews with County, Community Organization Staff	@64

MEMORANDUM

February 8, 1995

TO: Virginia Baxter, Acting Director  
Office of Procurement

VIA: Marc P. Hansen, Acting County Attorney *MPH*

FROM: Richard H. Melnick, Assistant County Attorney *RHM*

RE: Bethesda Urban Partnership- Status as a "Public Entity" for Procurement Purposes

This memorandum is to follow-up on a request from John Polletto, of the Division of Parking, regarding whether the Bethesda Urban District ("BUD") is a "public entity" for purposes of the Montgomery County Procurement Regulations. After reviewing the circumstances surrounding this case, we conclude that the BUD is a "public entity" as envisioned by the Regulations.

Factual Background

The Division of Parking is interested in entering into a contract with the BUD, wherein the latter would perform landscape and maintain grass and tree areas in County owned parking lots located in the BUD. The County's Department of Transportation ("DOT") currently has a similar contract for the BUD to provide streetscaping of medians and streetsweeping inside of curbs, on roadways which the County otherwise maintains.

Issue

The question arises whether the proposed contract may be entered as a non-competitive "public entity procurement", thereby eliminating the need for public solicitation.

Analysis

The BUD is established pursuant to Chapter 68A of the Montgomery County Code, which delineates the purposes and functions of urban districts in the County. The BUP is a non-stock corporation created by the County Council, and is subject to the County Code. Montg. Co. Code, Sections 68A-9; -12. Urban districts were created by the County Council to address the concern that certain areas of the County are becoming "intensely developed communities containing diversified commercial, institutional, and residential development." Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-2(a). As a result, the Council created the BUD as a special taxing district to provide an administrative and financial framework for this area to: increase the maintenance of the streetscape and its amenities; provide additional public amenities such as plantings, seating, shelters, and works of art; promote the commercial and residential interests of the area; and, program cultural and community activities. Montg. Co. Code, Sections 68A-2, -3(a), -8.

Urban districts are created to provide public services and facilities that primarily benefit property and persons within the urban district. Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-3(e). By definition, an urban district corporation "is a public instrumentality"...which "performs tasks of benefit to the government." Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-9(a). In addition to enhancement, maintenance and provision of the streetscape and its amenities, the BUD may provide other initiatives to advance the business and residential communities. Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-9(b).

The limited extent to which the Code permits urban districts to compete with the private sector includes entering into contracts for maintaining streetscape amenities on public or private property. Montg. Co. Code, Sections 68A-11(b)(7); -11(c). Perhaps most importantly, the BUP is expressly not subject to the requirements of the County Procurement Regulations (except to make a good faith effort to comply with MFD requirements). Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-11(d). The BUP is also considered a "local government" as that phrase is used in the Local Government Tort Claims Act. Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-11(e).

The BUD fits within the Procurement Regulations' definition of "public entity", which includes:

(1) the federal, state and local governments or their agencies; (2) boards, commissions, or committees established by a federal, state, or local law; (3) government organizations or associations of the federal government, state governments, or political subdivisions of state governments; or (4) any other entity that both qualifies as a not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of the United States Internal Revenue Code and which is incorporated by one of the preceding entities for the exclusive purpose of supporting or benefiting a public entity

Montg. Co. Proc Regs., Section 2.4.81.

Since the BUP is a "public entity", the contract for the services described above requires neither public solicitation nor justification as a non-competitive procurement. Montg. Co. Proc. Regs. 4.1.12.1; 4.1.14.1. DOT has stated this contract is in the best interests of the County, both from a cost effectiveness and resources standpoint, and allows the BUD to provide services permitted by the Code at parking facilities located within that urban district. Montg. Co. Code, Section 11B-41.

### Conclusion

The DOT Division of Parking may contract with the BUD in a non-competitive procurement for the above-described landscaping services in parking facilities located in the BUD.



## Appendix B. Map of the Bethesda Circulator



Every five years, BUP brings together stakeholders to collect input for its strategic plan. Look inside to learn what people are saying about Bethesda and the work of BUP.

# BUP STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT - DRAFT

STRENGTHS, PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE  
AND THE ROLE OF BUP

Spring/Summer 2017  
Developed by Alineo Group

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## BACKGROUND & METHODS

### BACKGROUND

The Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) is charged with the management and marketing of downtown Bethesda. Bethesda is home to numerous retailers, arts organizations, a thriving restaurant community and an expansive downtown workforce. Established by Montgomery County in 1994, BUP fulfills the landscaping and maintenance needs and creates cultural events and festivals for the community. BUP is overseen by an 11-member Board of Directors comprising residents, businesses, developers and a County representative.

In 2000, BUP created Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS) to help manage the traffic in downtown Bethesda by marketing local, state and federal commuter benefits programs and tax incentives to employers. The BTS Advisory Committee provides input on staff's efforts to promote alternative modes and reduce single occupancy vehicle travel.

In 2002, the state of Maryland designated downtown Bethesda as an Arts & Entertainment (A&E) District. The A&E District is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization overseen by a 12-member Board of Directors of local artists and art-related business representatives. Both BTS and the A&E District are staffed by BUP employees.

BUP is funded primarily by revenue generated from the Bethesda Parking Lot District fees, in addition to the commercial Urban District property tax. Private sponsors also partner with BUP on community events.

BUP has been reauthorized three times by the County's Office of Legislative Oversight to continue its mission of making Bethesda a great place to live, work and play. Every five years, BUP completes a Strategic Plan shaped by recommendations from the BUP, BTS and Arts & Entertainment boards and committees, as well as input from stakeholder engagement sessions, interviews and survey feedback. The report below summarizes the input BUP received from its stakeholders and board/committee members in the Spring/Summer of 2017.

### METHODOLOGY

The board/committee work sessions, stakeholder engagement sessions, interviews and survey were planned by BUP staff in collaboration with Marti Reinfeld of the Alineo Group ("the consultant"). The consultant developed an agenda for each board/committee meeting and recommended facilitation techniques. Staff identified and recruited the participants for each stakeholder engagement session and the consultant created a facilitator guide (Appendix A) that was also used as discussion guide for the interviews.

#### BOARD AND COMMITTEES

Each of the Boards and committees met to discuss their vision for Bethesda, as well as their role in advancing that vision. A description of each agenda and the facilitation techniques used is described in the sections below.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

The seven stakeholder engagement sessions (or focus groups) were conducted with a range of six to 10 participants. The stakeholder groups included: Residents, Employers, Retail/Restaurants, Visitors, Developers, Marriott Employees and Montgomery County Partners.

Each session was 90 minutes and was guided by the consultant – a trained facilitator. Participants were asked to respond to a range of questions that addressed what makes Bethesda thriving and dynamic, their priorities for the future of downtown Bethesda, barriers to spending more leisure time in Bethesda and their impressions of BUP.

## INTERVIEWS

In addition to the stakeholder engagement sessions, the consultant conducted six one-on-one interviews with key informants, including:

- Ginanne Italiano, President & CEO, Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce
- Carol Trawick, The Trawick Foundation, Former BUP Board Member/Chair
- Charlie Nulsen, President, Washington Property Company
- Jack Hayes, East Bethesda Resident, Former BUP Board Member/Chair
- Robby Brewer, Lerch, Early and Brewer, Former BUP Board Member
- Chris Bruch, The Donohoe Companies, Former BUP Board Member/Chair

The 30-minute interviews focused on the current state of downtown Bethesda, their priorities for improving Bethesda, how BUP is doing and opportunities for BUP in the future.

## SURVEY

To solicit input from a broader audience, BUP also published an online survey. The survey was available online for 40 days and received 234 responses. The survey addresses BUP's work broadly and sought respondents' input on what would make Bethesda more livable and how BUP should focus its future efforts.

## SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

A variety of key themes emerged from the seven stakeholder engagement sessions, six interviews, and the work sessions with the Arts and Entertainment Board, the BTS Advisory Committee and the BUP Board of Directors.

### WHAT MAKES BETHESDA THRIVING AND DYNAMIC?

Over the course of the outreach effort, several common concepts emerged regarding what the stakeholders appreciate about downtown Bethesda today. In general, the stakeholders agreed that:

- Bethesda is **convenient to access** by all modes. It is close to transit, very walkable and has easy access to trails for commuting and exercise. The stakeholders were mixed on whether Bethesda has sufficient parking options and whether there is enough awareness of those options among visitors and workers.
- Downtown Bethesda hosts a **variety of amenities** within walking distance. There are many options for residents, visitors and workers, including retail, restaurants, a movie theater,

library, grocery stores, schools and farmer's markets. There is a blend of big businesses and smaller businesses.

- Bethesda is **clean and safe**. It is well-maintained and landscaped. In general, people feel safe walking around both day and night.
- These components have allowed Bethesda to evolve into a **vibrant, urban community** that offers the "complete package," where people can live, work and play.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE OF BETHESDA

The stakeholders also discussed a variety of issues that they see as critical for the continued evolution of Bethesda as an urban community. When asked what would make Bethesda more livable, a better place to work and an inviting place to visit, three key themes emerged:

- More green space must be identified in Bethesda. Existing **public spaces** – both green space and hardscaped plazas – need to be more visible, activated and programmed to attract more users.
- Enhanced **mobility** was a concern for most stakeholders. Priorities ranged from improving pedestrian safety to adding more bike infrastructure, maintaining Metro, completing the Purple Line, improving wayfinding and making parking options clear and convenient. Stakeholders hoped that investing in each of these areas would reduce congestion.
- Stakeholders were concerned about turnover for restaurants and retailers. A more **stable market** would strengthen the sense of community in Bethesda by giving people destinations that they can reliably return to. Many stakeholders want Bethesda to attract more **small businesses**, which would make the area feel more organic and unique.

#### IMPRESSIONS OF BUP

In general, the stakeholders were very complimentary of BUP, its work keeping Bethesda clean and well-maintained and the events it offers. In addition, many of the stakeholders commented that they rely on BUP's newsletter for information about what's going on around Bethesda. Some common themes included:

- BUP provides **helpful information** about upcoming events through social media, the newsletter and the kiosks on the street.
- BUP maintains Bethesda's clean urban environment and **attractive streetscape**, which is enjoyed by all users and is a key selling point for developers and property owners.
- BUP is knowledgeable about and has strong **relationships with the community**. It is an important liaison for the County and helps identify solutions that the community will support.
- BUP **events** are very popular with residents and workers and they attract people from throughout the region. There is an appetite for more BUP events among all stakeholders.
- Some stakeholders see a **new role for BUP** in helping to attract and retain retail/restaurants, reduce turnover and create an environment that is supportive of small businesses. BUP might generate ideas, convene and encourage action by key stakeholders (e.g., Chamber, developers), and advocate for business-friendly policies at the County and state level.

## BUP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors dedicated half a day to discuss their vision for downtown Bethesda and their role. The meeting started with the Board members each choosing two pictures from a series of cards: one image card that represented how they view Bethesda today and one that represented their hope or vision for Bethesda in the future. They then discussed four areas of BUP's work in more detail: beautification, mobility, arts and marketing. Finally, the Board explored their role in advancing their vision for Bethesda.

### VISION FOR BETHESDA

#### *Today*

The BUP Board highlighted many positive attributes in their description of Bethesda today.

**Complete package:** Bethesda offers opportunities to live, work and play for people of all ages in an area that is easily accessible by a variety of transportation modes. These ingredients provide Bethesda with the potential to continue to grow and thrive.

**Diversity:** Bethesda is internationally diverse and hosts a variety of age groups. There is also a difference in the character of the neighborhoods, though there is often homogeneity within each neighborhood (Bethesda Row skews older, Woodmont Triangle skews younger).

**Community infrastructure:** Bethesda is full of opportunities to experience the arts, places to exercise, and nearby trails. Access to these amenities makes it easier for residents and workers to establish a healthy work/life balance.

**Orderly:** Bethesda is clean, well-maintained and orderly. The down side of this trait is that Bethesda has been described as sterile or Disney-like. There are no hidden, rundown or cheaper areas where unique spaces could develop. Woodmont Triangle is more organic.

**Congested:** Transportation can be very frustrating in Bethesda for all types of users.

**Affluent:** Bethesda is well-educated and unique in its affluence, which has resulted in very good schools and high-quality housing stock. The housing, however, is not affordable for many and more options are needed to serve a variety of markets.

**Accessible:** It's easy and convenient to get to Bethesda, there's plenty of housing and there's a strong sense of community – the people (residents, business owners) are accessible too.

#### *The Future*

The Board then turned its attention to how it envisions Bethesda in the future.

**Diversity:** Bethesda will build on its diverse foundation and create more housing options and child-friendly amenities to attract young families.

**"On the map:"** There will be broad awareness of Bethesda and it will be known as vibrant and active.

**Crossroads:** Bethesda will be a junction, a meeting place of multiple areas from around the region.

**Branded:** Bethesda will have a strong identity. It will be known as a good place for anyone to live, an urban destination for visitors and an arts destination.

## MOBILITY

The Board discussed the current transportation system – its strengths and weaknesses – as well as how they envision mobility in Bethesda in the future.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Significant transit infrastructure (Metro and Circulator)	Metro in crisis and infrastructure is suffering
Good pedestrian and bicycle assets	Confusing, inadequate or unsafe pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., mid-block crossings on Wisconsin)
Walkability, places to walk to	Drivers are not respectful of pedestrians and pedestrian safety is an issue
	Major congestion, gridlock (some caused by through traffic)

In the future, the Board envisioned:

**Culture:** A shift in culture where all users are polite and courteous to each other and the system is safer for all travelers.

**Multimodal:** The transportation system is accessible for all users and travelers rely more and more on alternative modes.

**Well-Maintained:** Transit, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is funded and well-maintained to support non-SOV travel.

**Balanced:** The needs of all users are balanced across the system. Major streets are able to handle significant through traffic, but are activated and interesting to meet the needs of pedestrians.

**Innovative:** Bethesda keeps up with the pace of change and is ready for and eager to adopt new technologies (e.g., autonomous vehicles).

**Connected:** There are purposeful, activated connections between neighborhoods to draw people into different areas of Bethesda and make walking an attractive mode of travel.

## BEAUTIFICATION

The Board was highly satisfied with BUP's beautification efforts and their discussion of landscaping and maintenance in Bethesda gravitated heavily toward its strengths. The Board also addressed the need for public space and how to optimize the use of existing public space.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clean and free of trash	Unused, hidden pocket parks
High standard of care	Creativity constrained by County regulations
Diverse architecture	

The Board's vision for landscaping and public space in the future included:

**Green Space:** More opportunities for community gathering spaces – especially green space and pocket parks – will be identified throughout Bethesda.

**Accessible:** Existing public spaces in Bethesda will be visible and easy to find and access.

**Activated:** Parks and public spaces will have both static (e.g., tables, chairs) and dynamic (e.g., events, programming) activation to make them more comfortable and inviting for users.

**Interesting Architecture:** As Bethesda continues to develop, it will maintain diversity in its architecture.

**Creative:** Bethesda will have creative landscaping that is attractive and interesting. Funds will be used efficiently and creatively to do more with limited resources.

**Consistency:** Landscaping will meet a common standard of quality across Bethesda regardless of who maintains the space. BUP will consider extending landscaping to new areas.

#### ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The Board recognized that arts and entertainment is an economic driver with the potential to attract people and businesses. Their conversation focused primarily on how to improve arts and entertainment in the future.

**Space:** Bethesda will host a community gathering space that can host opportunities for artists (e.g., Black Box). It will draw new artists with pop-opportunities and incubators.

**Iconic:** Bethesda will invest in big events and installations draw people. Big art and music events may be tied to a cause (e.g., benefit concerts).

**Edgy:** Bethesda will attract cutting edge artists, musicians and galleries to Bethesda. It will expand beyond traditional arts to create new opportunities (e.g., culinary arts).

**Functional:** Art will be incorporated into existing community needs (e.g., mosaic potholes, sidewalk/street chalk art, traffic cabinet art, interesting bike racks, wayfinding).

**Integrated:** Art in Bethesda will reflect its unique community and history.

**Organic:** Bethesda will attract and provide space for a variety of musicians.

#### MARKETING

After considering the current and future state of Bethesda, its transportation system, public spaces and the arts, the Board considered how it would describe Bethesda's evolving and future brand. Key concepts that emerged include:

- Complete package
- Inviting, courteous
- Connected, multimodal
- International, diverse
- Urban, cosmopolitan
- Livable
- Office and employer friendly



## ROLE OF THE BUP BOARD

Finally, the Board turned its attention to how it can advance its vision for Bethesda. They included:

1. Stay informed and engaged about what's going on in the community and with BUP.
2. Be ambassadors. Know the message that BUP wants to communicate and stay on message.
3. Support staff and ask what the Board can do to help.
4. Serve as a channel of communication between BUP/Board and the community.
5. Monitor BUP's progress toward achieving organizational goals.
6. Pay attention to and bring back ideas and best practices from other communities.
7. Evaluate the performance of the Board and consider whether its structure and size are appropriate.

## BTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BTS promotes alternative transportation such as rail, bus, carpool and biking with the goal of reducing the number of Bethesda employees who drive alone to work. On June 14, 2017, the BTS Advisory Committee met to envision the future of Bethesda's transportation system. Similar to the BUP Board, the BTS Advisory Committee used image cards to begin a discussion of Bethesda mobility today and in the future and then discussed as a group to understand the varying perspectives across the Committee.

### MOBILITY: TODAY

The BTS Advisory Committee discussed the current state of mobility in Bethesda using words like "frustration" and "pain." Given the limited amount of time, the facilitator did not specifically ask the Board members to provide positive input and much of the members' feedback focused on what they would like to see change.

**Chaos:** There is little cooperation within or between modes. Travelers do not follow rules or treat each other with respect.

**Congestion:** The congestion in Bethesda is painful and getting around is made worse because of construction.

**Neglected Infrastructure:** The transportation infrastructure – particularly transit infrastructure – is insufficient and not well-maintained.

**Unsafe:** The network does not prioritize pedestrians. The infrastructure does not support pedestrian safety and pedestrians are not respected by other modes.

**Confusing:** The wayfinding in Bethesda is not clear for motorists, pedestrians, cyclists or transit users.

### MOBILITY: THE FUTURE

The Advisory Committee then discussed how it envisions mobility in Bethesda in the future.

**Multimodal Infrastructure:** Bethesda will offer more options for getting to, from and moving around within downtown. New infrastructure may include BRT, the Purple Line and bike lanes and parking. Investing and promoting multimodal options ensures optimal use of transportation infrastructure (i.e., roads carry more people in buses than in cars).

**Well-maintained:** Transportation infrastructure will be proactively and sufficiently maintained. A sustainable source of funding will be available for maintenance.

**Respectful:** Travelers of all modes will treat each other with respect and the system will operate with order.

**Reliable:** The transportation system will be easy to use, predictable, integrated and safe. From a user's perspective, traveling in Bethesda will be perceived as "calm."

**Branded:** Transit will be easy to identify and adequately marketed in the region.

**Innovative:** Bethesda will be future-oriented and think outside the constraints of the current system. It will be open to new and innovative technologies to improve the transportation network.

**Multimodal:** As the system evolves toward the characteristics defined above, travelers will gravitate more and more to alternative modes.

#### ROLE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The BTS Advisory Committee discussed what it can do to make its vision of the future possible. They identified a variety of strategies that the Committee can pursue including:

1. Be the eyes and ears of BTS by identifying transportation issues in Bethesda.
2. Advocate to the County, DOT, Council and State on behalf of Bethesda and BTS.
3. Coordinate with local police to improve safety for all modes.
4. Develop relationships in the community and be ambassadors for BTS's goals and strategies.
5. Track best practices and share them with the Committee.
6. Participate on the Metro task force and advocate for a well-maintained and reliable system.
7. Investigate new technologies and advocate to bring them to Bethesda.

## ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT BOARD

The Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District was established in 2002 to pursue and implement arts and entertainment projects that contribute to the artistic, cultural and economic growth of downtown Bethesda. The 12-member Board is comprised of local artists and art-related business representatives. The Board met on June 8 to discuss its vision for Bethesda.

Similar to the BTS Advisory Committee and the BUP Board, the consultant employed image cards to begin the meeting. Then, as a group, the Board discussed their perceptions and the Board's role in advancing their vision.

#### ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT: TODAY

Below is a summary of how the group described the Bethesda's arts and entertainment scene today. It is worth noting that in contrast with the focus groups and because of limited time, the facilitator did not specifically ask the Board members to provide positive input about the current state. Much of the members' feedback focused on what they would like to see change.

**Dull:** Arts in Bethesda needs to be bolder and more colorful to grab people's attention.

**Old-Fashioned:** Bethesda needs to think of new, innovative ways of doing business and not rely on the same old strategies to pursue arts and entertainment.

**Disjointed:** There are “individual jewels” in Bethesda, but the arts scene feels disparate and lacks cohesion.

**Potential:** The Arts and Entertainment District is in a building phase. The ingredients are there for the District to become much more.

**Lack of community:** There is not a strong sense of an arts community and Bethesda is lacking a community arts space.

**Audience:** Arts and entertainment in Bethesda draws an “older demographic” that is dull and “goes to bed early.”

Many of the members pointed to lack of funding as the primary cause of any deficiency of the Arts and Entertainment District. However, the challenges described above could be addressed by the Board regardless of the amount of funding and number of projects.

#### ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT: FUTURE

The Board then turned its attention to how it envisions Bethesda arts and entertainment in the future.

**Audience:** The Arts and Entertainment District will attract people of all ages.

**Recognizable:** The District will be known for a branded signature piece, event or collection.

**Cohesive:** Arts and entertainment in the District will feel cohesive, there will be an “orchestration” of individual elements.

**Connected:** It will instill joy and engender a personal connection with those who experience it. It will have a clear connection to the community (e.g., science, technology and innovation).

**Bold:** Arts and entertainment in Bethesda will be vibrant and energetic.

**High Quality:** Visitors to Bethesda know they’ll get the best in arts and entertainment.

#### ROLE OF THE BOARD

After the group imagined what the future of Bethesda’s Arts and Entertainment District could be like, it turned its attention to what the Board can do to achieve that vision. They identified a variety of strategies that the Board can pursue going forward including:

1. Develop a strategic plan with tangible actions. Some in the group thought it was time to revisit the mission.
2. Keep the vision and mission front and center (only some of the Board members’ name tents included the mission on the back).
3. Create a work program that the Board can sell to funders. The work program may include a concept for a signature event.
4. Identify stable revenue sources.
5. Continue to pursue a community space that can house arts and entertainment events.

Serve as ambassadors for arts and entertainment in Bethesda by participating in events and being able to articulate its value proposition.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

BUP hosted seven engagement sessions with the following stakeholder groups: Residents, Employers, Retail/Restaurants, Visitors, Developers, Marriott Employees and Montgomery County Partners. A summary of the seven stakeholder engagement sessions is described in detail below.

### RESIDENTS

#### BETHESDA'S STRENGTHS

The Residents impressions of what makes Bethesda thriving and dynamic included:

**Mobility:** Downtown Bethesda is very walkable and close to transit. The new route for the Circulator is good as it reaches more places. Biking has improved in Bethesda with the introduction of more bike lanes and Capital Bikeshare. The nearby trails are great for exercise. It is also easy to get out of the DMV region by car because of access to major roads.

**Amenities:** There are a variety of amenities within walking distance, including restaurants, farmer's markets and a good selection of supermarkets. Theater is also very accessible.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Among the priorities that the Residents mentioned were pedestrian safety, improved mobility, a stabilized retail and restaurant market and activated public spaces.

##### *Mobility and Safety*

The Residents expressed concern about the safety of the transportation network in downtown Bethesda. They noted a need for more bike lanes and other infrastructure to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe. They also recommended pedestrian-only streets as a safety measure and to add vibrancy and energy to the streets. Participants noted the completion of the Purple Line as critical for the health of Bethesda's transportation system.

Residents also discussed the need to help visitors in cars access downtown Bethesda. They recognized that there is sufficient parking and that the Circulator connects to some parking lots, but wondered whether visitors are aware that they can "park and ride."

##### *Retail Composition*

The Residents discussed their concern about "volatility in the retail space." They noted that there is a lot of turnover among restaurants and retail due to high rents. Stability, one participant mentioned, allows the neighborhoods to build character and strengthens the sense of community.

The Residents stated that they would like more retail in the Woodmont Triangle area to attract people there. They had differing opinions, however, on the mix of retail in downtown Bethesda. Some were in support of more "mom and pop" shops. Others believed it was beneficial for residents to have access to the bigger chains (e.g., Target).

##### *Public Space*

Residents agreed that downtown Bethesda needs to optimize the use of its existing public spaces. They mentioned that most of the public spaces that remain amidst the ongoing and planned development are hardscaped. They would like to see more green space incorporated in the downtown area and better connections among existing green spaces.

Residents also noted a need for better activation of Bethesda's public spaces. They would like them to be more inviting and user friendly with additional amenities like benches, chairs and tables. They observed that some public spaces are a bit hidden and could be made more visible and accessible for residents, workers and visitors.

#### *Leisure Time*

The Residents were well-versed in the many cultural amenities, restaurants and activities Bethesda offers. They spend time in both Bethesda Row and Woodmont Triangle and anticipate that when the Marriott comes in and density increases, the Triangle will become more active. They seek more cultural draws in addition to the existing galleries and theaters. They mentioned the need for more theater, concert venues (particularly independent venues) and a museum. The Residents regret the departure of Barnes & Noble, which they saw as a community gathering space that drew people of all ages.

#### IMPRESSIONS OF BUP

The Residents were familiar with BUP and its work. They remarked that BUP helps residents stay engaged with what's going on in the community and provides helpful information about upcoming events through social media, the newsletter and the kiosks on the street. Residents also appreciated the BUP staff around town wearing the red "Ask Me" shirts. The only additional information that Residents requested is a "what's new" section in the BUP newsletter (or other forum).<sup>1</sup>

Residents were generally impressed with the landscaping and maintenance that BUP does, as well as snow removal.

Residents also noted that they appreciate the events BUP hosts, especially the movies and music. The group brainstormed other possible events, including:

- Outdoor yoga or tai chi
- Unique outdoor lighting in the winter (and hot chocolate)
- Ice carving
- Dine & Dash in DC where attendees buy a ticket and get entrance to a variety of restaurants for food and wine tastings
- A First Friday-like event where attendees can buy a wine glass and get it filled at different businesses around downtown.

#### EMPLOYERS

##### BETHESDA'S STRENGTHS

Representatives from major employers in downtown Bethesda discussed what makes the neighborhood thriving and dynamic.

**Restaurants and Bars:** Their employees go to happy hour after work, which helps to build comradery among coworkers. Employers also use local dining options for team building and

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<sup>1</sup> Residents also get information about downtown Bethesda from Bethesda Magazine, Bethesda Patch, Bethesda Beat, local businesses on social media, and the Robert Dyer blog.

catering. In addition, because of the growth of dining options over the last five years, downtown Bethesda has grown into a destination. Outdoor seating is particularly nice and helps keep the streets energetic.

**Environmental Sustainability:** Downtown Bethesda has demonstrated a commitment to environmental sustainability through recycling programs and Earth Day activities. These programs are important for employees, particularly young people.

**Mobility:** There is great access to different transportation options, including the Metro and the trails. One employer mentioned that over 80 percent of their employees take transit or bike to work. The trail is also appreciated as an amenity for leisure and exercise.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The group also discussed its priorities for improving downtown Bethesda, emphasizing improved transportation, the cost of living and doing business, the need for additional public space and barriers to spending more leisure time in Bethesda.

##### *Transportation*

The group agreed that traffic congestion is a major problem in Bethesda, noting that the construction all over town makes the traffic even worse. While they did not have many complaints about the current parking supply, they expressed concern that the Marriott construction and development would remove an existing lot and put a major strain on parking.

The employer representatives supported the growth of alternative transportation modes in Bethesda. They recognized that transportation is a major factor in where young people choose to work and that car ownership and parking costs are high. Increased opportunities for biking, light rail and bus provides more options for people that don't live near the Metro. They saw a need for more bike lanes and additional bike share, particularly at peripheral parking lots. They also supported the continued construction of the Purple Line. They questioned, however, the effectiveness of the Circulator and believed it could be improved with more direct routing and more frequent and reliable operations. In addition, the participants saw pedestrian safety as a problem for the downtown area. Drivers do not pay enough attention to pedestrians.

##### *Affordability*

The Employers group commented that living in downtown Bethesda is "cost prohibitive" and saw a need for more affordable housing. They also noted that rents for retail space are very high, making it difficult for "mom and pop" shops to establish their businesses in Bethesda. Participants observed that the high cost of doing business has resulted in more high-end boutiques and less retail diversity and Bethesda therefore feels more oriented to tourists rather than workers and residents. They did not discuss any differences between Bethesda Row and Woodmont Triangle areas.

##### *Public Space*

The Employers discussed the need for more green space in downtown Bethesda. They are concerned about losing existing green space with the planned development in the area. They were very supportive of a green corridor proposed in the Sector Plan. From an employer's perspective, green spaces are important for creating more opportunities for their employees. Social sports, for

example, are very popular among young employees and without green spaces, it's hard to make those things happen.

#### *Leisure Time*

The Employer group mentioned a variety of activities that they and their employees engage in during their leisure time, including walking, happy hours, dining out and trivia nights. They also included fitness in that list, but noted that the fitness studios (e.g., yoga and cycling studios) tend to skew toward a high-income demographic. Other barriers to spending more leisure time in Bethesda included a lack of music and theater venues and a desire for places that feel more organic.

In addition, traffic congestion prohibits some people from spending their leisure time in Bethesda. Employees that live up I-270 "get out of here as quickly as possible." They are always seeking more telework opportunities and when they do come to work, they leave as early as possible to beat traffic.

#### IMPRESSIONS OF BUP

The employer representatives had all heard of BUP and BTS, but offered mixed responses on how much they knew about what each organization offers. The participants educated each other about some of what BTS offers, including participation at lobby fairs and help promoting and organizing carpooling.

In addition, some members of the group were familiar with and praised BUP's landscaping and maintenance efforts.

The group described BUP events as "huge draws" and viewed them as opportunities to promote a sense of community. They discussed ideas for additional events with a common theme of creating spaces for the community to come together and introducing the element of surprise through "pop-up" spaces. Specific ideas included:

- Transforming underutilized lots (e.g., parking lots) into beer gardens;
- Food truck festivals;
- Book fairs; and
- Music festivals.

The major employer representatives receive their information about Bethesda through a variety of media, including BUP and Bethesda Magazine (the newsletter, magazine and social media), Bethesda Patch, the County twitter feed, and BUP's banners and signs. They mentioned only one area where more information would be useful: ongoing and planned construction for both development and the Purple Line. Participants find the noise and traffic impacts of construction to be a nuisance and agreed it would be helpful to have more information in advance of planned construction work.

The Employer group appreciated the opportunity to give feedback on Bethesda and BUP. They were interested in coming together more frequently to network and to offer their input.

## RESTAURANTS AND RETAIL

### BETHESDA'S STRENGTHS

Representatives from the Retail and Restaurant group discussed what makes Bethesda thriving and dynamic, including:

**Vibrant:** Bethesda is becoming more lively and urban. There are more residents and visitors and more people out on the streets, which is good for business. People are starting to come out more for late night entertainment. Certain streets have a nice mix of restaurants and retail.

**Mobility:** Everything is walkable in downtown Bethesda. A lot of people bike and take advantage of the trails, as well, particularly on the weekends.

**Safety:** Bethesda is very safe. In particular, it's safe for women to walk around at night.

### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The Retail and Restaurant group then turned their attention to their top priorities for improving downtown Bethesda, including business vitality, transportation, the impacts of construction and dealing with rodents.

#### *Small Business Vitality*

The participants observed that Bethesda doesn't have the strong sense of community that it used to. They noted that the proliferation of restaurant and retail chains make the neighborhoods feel more touristy and less "cool."

The group also discussed the high cost of doing business in downtown Bethesda. They noted that rents are very expensive, small businesses have little or no leverage to negotiate with property owners, and other costs (e.g., minimum wage and paid sick leave) are increasing steeply. These growing costs lead to high restaurant and retail turnover and make it hard for small businesses to establish themselves in Bethesda.

In addition, the group noted that the impending closures of Barnes and Noble and the potential closure of the Tastee Diner would be significant losses for Bethesda and detract from its sense of community. Tastee Diner offered character to the neighborhood and Barnes and Noble served as a community gathering place. They briefly noted a need for more community spaces in downtown, particularly green spaces.

#### *Transportation*

Restaurant and retail owners/representatives are concerned about parking availability and convenience, noting that customers want to be able to park as close as possible to their destination. They also observed that parking has become expensive for their employees. They suggested:

- Better wayfinding inside parking garages, which would make them more user friendly and promote businesses by pointing people to nearby restaurants/retail;
- Short-term parking options near restaurants/retail for customers who are making a short trip;



- Making parking more convenient with broader availability of change machines, multi-space meters and an app.<sup>2</sup>

A couple participants also expressed concern about parking meters being active until 10 pm. They initially claimed that requires customers to interrupt their dinner to feed a meter, but recognized that where a parking app is available, that would not be necessary.

In addition to parking concerns, the group noted that congestion is an issue for downtown Bethesda and worried that traffic would worsen when Marriott moves in. Some participants also wondered whether the new Circulator route was generating the same ridership levels.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Construction/Right-of-Way*

The restaurant and retail group discussed how activity in the public right-of-way can impact business vitality. The participants noted that the proliferation of construction and new development in downtown Bethesda makes it harder to drive and harder to walk. They observed that businesses suffer because pedestrians don't pick their way through the construction to get to restaurants or retailers that are not easily accessible or visible.

The participants also commented that the County is making it harder and more expensive to obtain permits for outdoor seating. Outdoor seating, they noted, is important for street vitality and can contribute to the health of small restaurants and cafes. In addition, the group discussed a rodent problem in downtown and observed that it has been worsening as Bethesda becomes more urban and construction increases. They observed that the problem occurs only late at night. The participants understood that poison could not be used, but wondered whether screens on the sewers or dry ice would address the problem.

#### *IMPRESSIONS OF BUP*

Among the restaurant and retail participants, familiarity with BUP's work was mixed. There was general name recognition and they all knew about BUP's events. Not all participants knew about BUP's other work, but participants educated each other saying that BUP cleans up the trash, fixes the landscaping, helps with storms and put planters all the way down Arlington to give some consistency to landscaping across Bethesda.

In general, the group was very complimentary of BUP's work and offered several examples of when BUP had been helpful (e.g., when a participant dropped keys down the sewer or faced a traffic situation).

#### *Events*

The restaurant and retail participants were very familiar with BUP's events and commented that customers take advantage of them. They noted that the art festival attracts people from all over and exposes them to Bethesda businesses. They believed that there's room for more events and hoped to see a broader variety of events that weren't "too conservative." Specific examples included:

<sup>2</sup> Note from BUP: There is an App to pay for parking in Bethesda. This respondent is unaware of this parking payment feature.

<sup>3</sup> Note from BUP: Ridership has increased with the expansion of the Circulator route.

- Friday happy hour or First Friday event;
- Outdoor concerts; and
- Charity walk/rides.

#### *Economic Development*

The group discussed BUP's role in strengthening the sense of community in Bethesda by helping to reduce turnover and maintain retail and restaurant diversity. Several participants believed that BUP should provide support for local businesses and take on a role of communicating with landlords to help create a more stable environment for small businesses.

## VISITORS

### BETHESDA'S STRENGTHS

Participants from the Visitors group first discussed their overall impressions and priorities for downtown Bethesda, beginning with what makes Bethesda "thriving and dynamic" already. The Visitors group identified the following themes:

**Schools:** Downtown Bethesda has access to great schools, which makes it attractive to residents.

**Mobility:** It's easy to get to and from Bethesda by Metro and once you're in Bethesda it's very walkable. The walkability also makes it easy for kids/teenagers to get around on their own. The nearby trails are great for exercise, leisure and getting around.

**Amenities:** There is a variety of amenities and services, including grocery stores, gas stations, movies, shopping, and restaurants.

**Beautiful and Vibrant:** Downtown has nice architecture, attractive buildings and beautiful landscaping and flowers. All of it is well-maintained. There is a lot of activity on the streets and they are often filled with people, lending a high energy feel to Bethesda. There are a variety of activities that draw people out, including the farmers market and outdoor concerts.

**Variety:** Bethesda is attractive to all age ranges. There are playgrounds for kids and activities that are interesting for all ages. There is also a different feel to the neighborhoods. Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row have different retail/restaurant options. Participants appreciate different things about each neighborhood.

**Safety:** Bethesda feels safe, even at night. People feel comfortable letting their teenagers be out at night in Bethesda, as well.

### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Participants then turned to their priorities for the future of downtown Bethesda. The primary themes that emerged include the need for more and better activated green spaces and community gathering spaces, enhanced pedestrian safety and access to information about new development and construction that is happening around Bethesda.

#### *Public Space*

Participants expressed a desire for "a lot more green space," particularly in a central location, such as near the Bethesda Metro Station entrance. The green space would serve as a community gathering spot. There was also agreement that small green spaces need to be incorporated

throughout Bethesda as part of the planned development. London's small parks were mentioned as an example.

In addition to the need for more green space, participants wanted to see better activation of existing hardscaped areas. The plaza in front of the Target was cited as an example of the uninviting public spaces that could be improved. They appreciated existing events, like concerts and yoga, and saw opportunities for more events like these, as well as more areas to sit.

Other comments related to public space included the need for a dog park and concern about losing Barnes and Noble, which is seen as a child-friendly community gathering place.

#### *Pedestrian Safety*

The group was concerned about pedestrian safety in downtown Bethesda and shared a hope that Bethesda could adopt a "pedestrian first" mentality in its design and attitude among travelers. At least one participant noted that they would not let their children walk around Bethesda alone because of a concern about pedestrian safety. The group mentioned several specific areas that could be improved, including wider sidewalks, longer crossing times at intersections and intersections designed to make it easier to see pedestrians.

Participants also noted that Bethesda is challenging to navigate in a car because of complicated intersections and street design and lack of adequate wayfinding. They believed that this results in drivers paying less attention to pedestrians.

The group also discussed ongoing and planned construction and development in terms of the transportation system and pedestrian safety. They noted that the system is already congested and that construction is only making it worse. They also would like to see pedestrians accommodated better around construction sites.

Related to the pedestrian experience, Visitors are looking for a more beautifully designed and engaging neighborhood. One participant noted that new buildings are not as beautiful as the old ones and all the construction and vacant storefronts make walking the streets less interesting.

#### *Retail Composition*

The Visitors group would like to see a more stable restaurant and retail market in downtown Bethesda. They are concerned about the amount of turnover. There was general agreement that more unique, "mom and pop" retail would be better for the neighborhood and attract more visitors from outside Bethesda, unlike chain restaurants and retail.

They noted a difference in vibe between "old Bethesda" (i.e., Woodmont Triangle) and "new Bethesda" (i.e., Bethesda Row), remarking that new Bethesda feels more commercial. The participants were mixed on whether they like old or new Bethesda better. Some had a preference while others appreciated them for different things (e.g., they liked the low-key vibe of Woodmont Triangle and appreciated being able to try new restaurants at Bethesda Row).

Several participants expressed how much they like the farmer's market and Women's Market and would like to see something similar in Woodmont Triangle to draw people to "Old Bethesda."

The group also had different opinions about the Marriott coming in to Bethesda. Some saw it as providing stability to downtown Bethesda, while others perceived it as just another big chain.



### *Access to Information*

The Visitors identified access to information as one barrier to an individual spending more of their leisure time in Bethesda. They get their information about Bethesda from the Bethesda Beat, the Robert Dyer blog and the BUP newsletter, but noted that people have to be proactive to get that information. They also recognized that many of the BUP events are advertised with banners, but believed there are opportunities for more signs around town to market activities and events. One participant that works in Bethesda remarked that the building does not share information about events and other workers in the building are therefore not aware of what's going on in downtown Bethesda.

Visitors also believed there is a need for better information about how/where to park in Bethesda and how to park and take the Circulator into the downtown area. (Note: Visitors did not complain about a lack of parking but thought that better information and signage could alleviate the perception that others have about limited parking.)

Finally, the group discussed a need for better information about how the County operates and who to contact when an issue (e.g., broken sidewalk, construction noise) arises.

### *Miscellaneous*

Participants also discussed a desire for more cultural institutions in Bethesda as an amenity for residents and visitors. Ideas included an additional movie theater, cultural centers or museums, such as a Please Touch Museum for children.

Visitors appreciate the Circulator, but want to see it running on a more regular schedule, including Sundays.

### IMPRESSIONS OF BUP

The Visitors group was generally familiar with BUP, though the acronym was new to some of them. Several participants mentioned that they rely on the BUP newsletter for information about what's going on around town. They also appreciate BUP's efforts in maintaining the beauty and cleanliness of downtown Bethesda.

The group noted their appreciation of BUP events and would like to see even more events, including some targeted to children.<sup>4</sup> Other suggestions included bringing back the dog event or partnering with – or building on the presence of – NIH with events that are science and technology themed (e.g., Maker Fairs). Although one person mentioned that additional events may not be necessary, but rather just more ways to get information out about existing events.

At least one participant questioned the B's throughout town and whether they were a good use of money. They also questioned why the B's are all the same rather than different and "artsy."

### DEVELOPERS

#### BETHESDA'S STRENGTHS

The Developers group began by discussing what makes Bethesda thriving and dynamic, including:

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<sup>4</sup> Note from BUP: The annual Imagination Bethesda is a large-scale street festival specifically targeted to children and families. We believe that this respondent is unaware of this festival.

**Urban Atmosphere:** Bethesda has evolved into an urban community and offers the “complete package,” where people can live, work and play. Bethesda Row transformed the area, making it into a destination.

**Mobility:** Bethesda is very accessible via Metro, making it attractive for residents, employers and visitors. For the most part, the neighborhoods are walkable, as well.

**Retail Diversity:** The group appreciated the many bars and restaurants, as well as the different types of retail at Bethesda Row and Woodmont Triangle. They found Woodmont Triangle to be more “organic,” but appreciated the availability of a diversity of retail options.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Representatives from the Developers group also discussed their priorities for improving downtown Bethesda, which included transportation, public space and economic development.

##### *Transportation*

The group observed that Bethesda has experienced a slow transition from a suburban to urban environment. They described the street grid as “difficult to navigate” for all types of travelers. They noted that intersections do not prioritize pedestrians and that it can be difficult to cross roads.

The participants also noted that cycling is on the rise across the region and is in high demand among employees who want to be able to ride their bike to work. They see potential for Bethesda to invest more in bike lanes, bike storage and bike parking.

Finally, the group agreed that construction of the Purple Line is critical for the continued growth and success of Bethesda.

##### *Commercial/Retail*

The participants in the Developers group described Bethesda as not having a “center.” They were divided, however, on whether this was a problem for the downtown area. Some participants described the commercial retail in Bethesda as “disparate” and lacking a “coordinated retail strategy,” while others appreciated the different types of retail in Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row. Most of the participants valued the more “organic” feel of Woodmont Triangle. One participant expressed hope that the Sector Plan would help Bethesda feel more holistic and carefully thought out.

Some participants also noted that Bethesda needs to attract more diverse activities beyond shopping and restaurants. They believed that more entertainment options would help attract more visitors.

On two occasions, the group compared Bethesda to Rosslyn, VA, observing that Bethesda needs:

1. More active nightlife, more high-quality after-hours bars and restaurants; and
2. More interesting retail on the main thoroughfares (e.g., Wisconsin Avenue).

##### *Residential/Office Value*

The Developers group discussed their concerns about the value of housing and office space in Bethesda. They noted that for many, residential and office space is “affordable,” but they are not satisfied with what they can get for their money. The developers mentioned a need for more for-

sale housing stock, as well as better office space that could make Bethesda more competitive with other areas in the region.

#### *Public Space*

The Developers described the public spaces in downtown Bethesda as “underutilized.” Specifically, one participant mentioned the plazas connecting 7700 Wisconsin and 4800 Hampton. The group asserted that if public spaces were more activated, more people would take advantage of them. In addition, they mentioned that some spaces are not visible or accessible (e.g., hidden behind buildings or out of the way) and better signage or programming is needed to direct people there.

The group also indicated that arts in Bethesda feels forced. In some cases, developers are required to install art and the result does not feel organic.

#### IMPRESSIONS OF BUP

The developers were all familiar with BUP and its work. They specifically mentioned BUP’s efforts to keep Bethesda attractive by maintaining landscaping and taking care of trash. Because of BUP’s initiative, developers can advertise a clean urban environment and attractive streetscape.

The group discussed their desire for a business improvement district in downtown Bethesda, noting that because they are market- and owner-driven, they can have a greater impact. One participant observed that in its current set-up, BUP’s work is tightly controlled by the County government. The group believed that owners and developers have a perspective that would attract more residents and businesses to Bethesda. They also noted that BUP can act as a clearinghouse for conflict, but their political influence and ability to advocate on behalf of what’s best for Bethesda is limited.

#### MARRIOTT EMPLOYEES

Employees from Marriott came to the BUP offices to discuss what they are most looking forward to about the headquarters moving to Bethesda and what they are most concerned about. The groups familiarity with Bethesda was varied, as some members of the group lived in or near the downtown area, while others lived in Washington, D.C. or north Montgomery County and knew less about what Bethesda offers. The session was an opportunity for feedback and allowed the participants to educate each other about Bethesda and their upcoming move there. There was a general recognition that Marriott must continue to educate itself and its employees about opportunities in Bethesda.

#### BETHESDA’S STRENGTHS

The Marriott representatives began the conversation by discussing what they are most looking forward to about moving their offices to Bethesda.

**Urban Amenities:** There are a variety of options that employees will be able to take advantage of during lunch and after work, including restaurants, bars, retail, gyms and grocery stores. There are often special events to attend after work and most of the amenities and activities are walkable. The convenient access may improve work-life balance, allowing employees to take care of errands at lunch and have more leisure time after work. The group also discussed opportunities to partner with retailers and gyms for company discounts.

The Marriott representatives also discussed other opportunities for spending their leisure time in Bethesda, including walking around downtown, walking their dogs, enjoying the Sunday farmer's market and music at the Metro.

**Transportation:** For some, the move will mean a shorter commute. The Metro proximity and walkability of Bethesda will improve the commute for some employees and will make it easier for visitors to access the office or for employees to attend meetings elsewhere. One participant (a resident of Bethesda) was familiar with and found the Circulator and its app useful.

**Community Partner:** Being integrated into the neighborhood will also increase brand and name recognition for Marriott and provide opportunities for the company to show up as a good corporate partner and member of the community. The representatives see potential to participate in community events and do volunteer work with local non-profits.

#### MARRIOTT CONCERNS

The group also discussed what concerns them most about the upcoming move, with transportation being the number one concern.

##### *Transportation*

According to the Marriott representatives, parking at the current Marriott headquarters is plentiful and free. Employees anticipate less parking being available, but also recognized that less will be needed because some employees will be able to get to work via other modes. They were also concerned that they will have to start paying for parking when the headquarters moves to Bethesda. A couple participants also expressed concern about walking through public parking garages alone at night.

For some Marriott employees, the commute will get longer and they are concerned about facing traffic on their way to/from work. Employees also wondered what impact the move would have on neighborhood traffic and whether that would impact the community's image of Marriott.

For those who would begin taking transit to work, they were concerned about Metro's ongoing struggles, the unreliability of the Red Line and the frequent renovations at the Bethesda Metro Station. They described the bus depot at the top of the Bethesda Metro as "dark and dirty" and "not an area that I love to walk through."

Generally, the group described Bethesda as very walkable, but wondered how the ongoing and planned development construction would impact the pedestrian environment. They also saw opportunity for more and better bike infrastructure, especially connecting their office to the trail network.

##### *Cost of Living*

Employees are looking forward to the accessibility of amenities, but expressed concern about personal expenses increasing because (1) urban areas are more expensive and (2) they will have access to more places to spend money. They also noted the high cost of taking Metro (and parking at Metro parking lots) and the cost of gas within Bethesda.

##### *Safety/Security*

While most of the participants described downtown Bethesda as safe, they recognized that there would more interaction with the community and hotel guests in their new building. A couple



participants were concerned about their personal safety in a building that allows so much more access to the public.

#### *Additional Opportunities*

The group also discussed what they perceive as gaps or opportunities in downtown Bethesda. These included a dog park, an enhanced arts and music community, and more breakfast dining options. In addition, the participants expressed concern about retail stability in Bethesda. They observed that developers charge high rents, leading to retail vacancies. They were concerned that developers might have similar difficulty filling the new luxury condo buildings. Finally, they observed that businesses tend to close early in Bethesda.

#### IMPRESSIONS OF BUP

Several of the participants – particularly those that live in or near downtown Bethesda – were familiar with BUP and what it offers. They noted that the BUP newsletter has a lot of useful information about activities and events.

The participants described BUP as keeping Bethesda “urban, well-kept and safe.” Many in the group were aware that BUP keeps Bethesda clean, picks up trash, maintains the landscaping, staffs the information kiosks and installs the red B’s. They find BUP to be well-branded and noted the red trucks that “take care of things” and people in uniforms that are “present and approachable.” One participant was not familiar with BUP, but stated that he was “more attracted to Bethesda just knowing that an organization like BUP exists.”

One participant offered that BUP probably influenced Marriott’s decision to move to Bethesda. Marriott “puts people first” and Bethesda has that same warm, hospitable feel to it, making it a good fit.

#### *Events*

The Marriott representatives are looking forward to attending the events in downtown Bethesda. They also had ideas for new events that BUP could explore, including:

- Urban campout: “You bring a tent, you pay 10 bucks, there’s hot dogs and hamburgers, you make s’mores. You can spend the night in the tent if you want to, or you can come and then go home... I’ve seen some other neighborhoods do it and be very successful in terms of bringing communities together in a very easy, casual way.”
- Outdoor juried food festival (e.g., Smorgasburg in Brooklyn);
- More farmer’s markets; and
- Charity races.

#### COUNTY PARTNERS

##### BETHESDA’S STRENGTHS

The County Partners began their discussion with what makes Bethesda thriving and dynamic, including:

**Mobility:** There’s good connectivity to downtown Bethesda. It is walkable, there is plenty of parking and it is transit accessible.

**Amenities:** There are a variety of amenities in Bethesda and everything is in walking distance. There are many things that people need or want to go to, including retail, restaurants, a movie theater, library, and grocery stores. There is a good blend of big businesses and smaller businesses. Events also attract residents, workers and visitors.

**Attractive:** Bethesda is well-maintained and landscaped.

**Safety:** Crime in Bethesda is very low.

#### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The group also discussed their priorities for improving downtown Bethesda, which included transportation, public space and the use of right-of-way, and nightlife.

##### *Transportation*

The group agreed that the transportation network in Bethesda is good, but there is room for improvement. As it continues to improve accessibility, it will be more convenient and more attractive for people to spend time in Bethesda. They commented that congestion is bad – in part because of cut-through traffic – and that congestion impacts safety in Bethesda. The downtown Bethesda district has the highest police response time in the entire County because of traffic congestion.

Bethesda, participants suggested, should build on what it has by promoting walking, biking and transit. More transportation alternatives – like BRT, the Purple Line, bikeshare and better bike infrastructure – would be assets to the community. The County Partners noted, however, that there are too many transportation-related brands (e.g., better Ways to Work, BTS), which may be confusing for the traveling public. They would also like people to understand that TDM efforts are carried out by BUP and the County.

One participant suggested that the County must start thinking of Bethesda as *urban* and implement appropriate parking and transit policies. For example, Frederick charges more per hour for parking than Bethesda. Bethesda could also consider limiting parking supply to promote transit usage.

Finally, the County Partners observed that wayfinding in downtown Bethesda needs to be improved to help all travelers get around easier.

##### *Right of Way*

The topic of how to use the public right of way (ROW) came up several times. Some of the County Partners were concerned that objects in the ROW get in the way of pedestrians navigating the neighborhood. They suggested that Bethesda needs to balance the needs of pedestrians with landscaping and retailers' desire for sidewalk cafés.

##### *Development*

The County Partners observed that, if uncontrolled, the development boom could have an adverse effect on Bethesda's sense of livability and walkability. The ongoing and planned development adds to the congestion pressures and parking demand in Bethesda. The new buildings will bring in more employees, as well as visitors going in and out. In addition, add to congestion and parking demand during construction, while construction disrupts pedestrian areas.

### *Nightlife*

The participants discussed strategies for improving the economic health of the downtown area, particularly at night. They suggested that bars and restaurants stay open later and serve liquor. They also observed that the lack of affordable housing makes it difficult to attract young residents. More young residents would mean more patrons at bars and restaurants. Finally, they suggested that increased programming in public spaces would attract people and help drive nightlife, as well.

### *Public Space*

Most of the group agreed that Bethesda needs more green space. While there are a variety of public spaces in Bethesda, most of them are hardscaped. One participant also mentioned a need for dog parks. The group recommended increased programming of public spaces, such as hosting regular concerts, as well as more public art at County facilities (e.g., County garages). A couple participants also suggested converting parking lots to parks.

### IMPRESSIONS OF BUP

The County Partners' impression of BUP was overwhelmingly positive. They described BUP as "very collaborative" and "wonderful." They commented that BUP communicates well and is a great partner and liaison between the County and the community. They also noted that BUP is highly knowledgeable about the community. The County Partners suggested that they should explore every opportunity to leverage BUP's connections with the community so that they could all work together to find solutions.

The County Partners also discussed several opportunities for BUP's work to improve or expand, including:

**ROW:** Several of the partners believed that BUP is putting things in the public ROW – or allowing businesses to put things in the ROW – without County permission (e.g., flowerpots, signage, trash cans).

**Emergency Planning:** One participant suggested that BUP should play a role in emergency situations (e.g., developing contingency plans). One first responder noted that BUP is very helpful in emergency situations, particularly snow.

**County Image:** County Partners would like BUP to understand – and help residents understand – that the County must balance many competing interests. Bethesda is one of many areas that needs County attention and resources.

**Transit:** The partners suggested that BTS should advocate for better bus service throughout the County, noting that it would help ease congestion in Bethesda, as well. BUP should think of the entire region and recognize that "Bethesda is not an island." The participants also suggested increased marketing of the Circulator as a way to get around Bethesda (e.g., ads in County garages). They commented that the frequency could be improved, as well as the app.

**Marketing:** The County Partners discussed opportunities for improved marketing of Bethesda, questioning whether visitors to DC know about Bethesda.

## INTERVIEWS

The interviews focused on the current state of downtown Bethesda, their priorities for improving Bethesda, how BUP is doing and opportunities for BUP in the future.

### STATE OF BETHESDA

Each interview began with a discussion of what makes downtown Bethesda a thriving and dynamic place to live, work or visit. The themes that emerged are summarized below.

**Accessible:** Bethesda has easy access to transit, including the Metro and the Circulator. It is also very walkable and has reasonably priced public parking.

**Amenities:** Bethesda has the most dynamic retail in Montgomery County, including restaurants, services and shops (e.g., drug store, hardware store). Residents and employers are attracted to the excellent schools. There is a diverse array of entertainment options (e.g., movie theaters, music venues and two play houses).

**Economic vitality:** Bethesda's economy is vibrant – office buildings are full, retail is doing well and there are a variety of events and activities. Bethesda is a destination – visitors come from all over the region. There is a lot of energy and street traffic ("in a good way"). The Marriott and JBG moves are big successes and positive signs about Bethesda's growth.

**Safe:** There is a low crime rate, particularly in comparison to other areas of the County. The safety in Bethesda makes it an attractive destination for residents and visitors.

### PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

#### *Economic Development*

The interviewees agreed that it is critical to create and maintain an environment in downtown Bethesda where businesses can grow and thrive. They observed that a healthy economy – one with full retail and office buildings – will attract more businesses and residents. One interviewee described Bethesda as losing its sense of place and identity. Several people saw opportunity for Bethesda to be "energized" and become more of a hub for the region. A few specific areas of improvement included:

- Government could be more business friendly. Bethesda needs regulations that make it more competitive with other downtown areas in the region (e.g., make it easier for restaurants to do outdoor seating).
- The high cost of doing business (e.g., rents) makes it hard to keep businesses running and attract residents.
- There is significant restaurant turnover. The restaurant scene is good, but Bethesda doesn't seem to attract any of the top 100 restaurants in the region.
- Construction is necessary, but a nuisance. Bethesda should look for ways to mitigate the noise, traffic and walkability impacts of construction.
- An edgier downtown area would attract more young people. The following would make downtown Bethesda livelier and edgier: (1) looser regulations on bars and noise, (2) attracting the maker/creative economy and (3) more organic and non-chain restaurants/retail like in Woodmont Triangle.



- Housing prices are very high. There is affordable housing that works well, but more is needed.

#### *Transportation*

The interviewees observed that the accessibility and connectivity are two of Bethesda's greatest assets and maintaining a reliable, safe convenient transportation network is critical to the ongoing success of downtown. One person commented that mobility can be a barrier to people spending more leisure time in Bethesda.

Traffic congestion was a common concern. One interviewee suggested that if Bethesda does not deal with traffic, it will get a reputation for being a traffic nightmare and it will become difficult to attract residents and businesses. They also remarked that it is important for Bethesda to make improvements in traffic congestion before Marriott moves in.

To ease congestion and improve mobility, the interviewees agreed that building, maintaining and improving transit – Metro, the Circulator and the Purple Line – must be a priority. Suggestions for enhancing transit included:

- Metro entrances at NIH and Bethesda must be in good repair;
- Bethesda Metro entrance should be a more pleasant gateway to downtown (e.g., well-lit, clean, filled with art)
- The Circulator route should be expanded;
- Circulator maintenance must be a priority (e.g., the black vans that sometimes stand in for buses disrupt the brand and make it confusing for potential travelers);
- The Circulator should connect to the NIH Metro station.

The interviewees also identified several improvements that could be made to the mobility experience for pedestrians and cyclists, including:

- Additional bikeshare stations and bike lanes;
- Well-maintained and visible crosswalks; and
- Clear and legible wayfinding signs.

Improvements for pedestrians were identified as particularly important during the current construction boom.

In addition to more convenient and reliable transportation alternatives, one interviewee suggested that congestion could be improved with better traffic enforcement and traffic signal synchronization.

Most interviewees agreed that there is sufficient parking in Bethesda, although there is a misperception that there is not enough parking that needs to be addressed. One person remarked that there is significant parking demand and that converting parking lots into parks is a concern.

#### *Public Space*

About half of the interviewees discussed public space as a priority for Bethesda. They observed that downtown Bethesda needs more public spaces and the existing ones need to be more activated or "functional." Veteran's Park in Woodmont Triangle was mentioned as an example of a highly functional and inviting park because of its great seating, nice shade and live music and

food vendors. Parks that are not as well activated or programmed seem to be underutilized. One interviewee observed that the parks do not have a consistent maintenance level across Bethesda and that if a park is well-maintained and comfortable, it will attract more people.

#### *Public Art*

Three of the interviewees mentioned opportunities for expanding and improving the arts scene in Bethesda. They discussed hosting more art fairs, bringing in a broader spectrum of art at different price points and looking for ways to make the art scene edgier. A couple of people also remarked that more outdoor music will add to Bethesda's liveliness.

#### *IMPRESSIONS OF BUP*

The interviewees were very complimentary of BUP and the work it does to keep Bethesda clean, well-maintained and lively. One person remarked that conducting a strategic plan is an example of BUP's commitment to be proactive and not reactionary. Interviewees noted that BUP is highly responsive and delivers its core functions well, taking care of infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, light bulbs, median plantings), providing support to boards and commissions and having a presence on the streets that makes downtown feel hospitable.

The interviewees also mentioned a variety of opportunities for BUP to enhance – but not drastically change – its mission by working more efficiently or creatively. These areas of improvement generally fell into four broad categories: public space, economic development, management and leadership and marketing and events.

#### *Public Space*

While BUP does a great job of taking care of the public space, there is room for additional creativity. The landscaping, one interviewee observed, has been the same for many years. Adding more color or creativity to the landscaping is an opportunity to add interest to the public space. BUP should focus on and invest in the main entry points to downtown (e.g., Wisconsin, East-West Highway and Bethesda Metro Station) and use landscaping to draw people from the west side of Wisconsin into the central business district.

#### *Economic Development*

As mentioned above, the interviewees saw potential for increased economic vitality in downtown Bethesda. They also discussed BUP's role in economic development. One participant described BUP's role as "generator of ideas and convener." While BUP is not a business improvement district (BID), it can develop strategies for attracting and retaining businesses and encourage the Chamber and others to take initiative. It could also drive economic development and attract retail and restaurants through stronger branding. One interviewee suggested that BUP should act more like a BID and explore strategies to grow and stabilize the economy (see *Marketing* below).

The interviewees also had several specific suggestions, including:

- Converting the Women's Farmers Market into a "hipper" space like Union Market;
- Marketing and promoting venues that don't get enough attention, like the Bethesda Blues & Jazz club;
- Consider Bethesda in terms of the region – not just in terms of Montgomery County; and
- Invest in technology so Bethesda feels more future oriented (e.g., electronic kiosks and mobile apps).

### *Management & Leadership*

The interviewees discussed several ways for BUP to improve or expand its jurisdiction, management and efficiency.

Two people called for more energized leadership, noting that to be competitive, BUP must be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial. They called on BUP to continue to be solution-oriented, noting that although BUP has limited jurisdiction, it can strive to influence outcomes in downtown Bethesda even when it does not have direct control. BUP could also play more of a convening role, arbitrating issues of concern for residents and businesses. BUP plays this role for those “in the know,” but could take on a more overt responsibility helping people navigate issues like noise and lane closures.

Two interviewees suggested that BUP could improve its efficiency. To people on the street, it can seem like BUP always has new equipment and many people staffing a single job. One person suggested that BUP benchmark itself against other BIDs in the region, particularly for measures of cost efficiency. Benchmarking would demonstrate whether BUP is using its resources efficiently compared with similar organizations in the region. BUP should also look to other similar organizations for other best practices (e.g., changing auditors every five years).

One interviewee commented that BUP is so effective it should expand its jurisdiction by taking over other municipal functions and increasing its geographic boundaries. They noted that BUP can work more efficiently than the County and that there is a grey area along the fringes of downtown where BUP’s maintenance efforts would have a big impact.

### *Marketing and Events*

A couple of the interviewees commented that the Bethesda brand needs to be updated to be more hip and edgy. They suggested that a more comprehensive and creative campaign was needed to compete with neighborhoods like NoMA. One person noted that BUP’s marketing focus should be on branding Bethesda (not BUP) and that branding is an important strategy in growing and sustaining the economy.

One interviewee recommended incorporating branding and marketing into other BUP initiatives. For example, using arts and entertainment to draw visitors to Bethesda or implementing unique and interesting wayfinding that draws people to different areas of downtown (e.g., Norfolk Avenue).

The interviewees generally agreed that BUP’s events are an important component in marketing Bethesda and attract visitors from around the region. They were supportive of both continuing the current events and adding new ones, such as additional outdoor concerts or outdoor theater.

## SURVEY

Following the stakeholder engagement and Board and Committee work sessions, BUP published a survey open to the public, which was completed by 234 people. The survey sought feedback on how often people take advantage of Bethesda’s amenities, their awareness of BUP and its work, what would make Bethesda more livable and how BUP should focus its efforts in the future. A similar survey was published in 2013. Where the questions are the same and there is a notable difference in the results, the change from 2013 is indicated.

In the 2017 survey, most respondents (75%) reported that they live in a Bethesda neighborhood or downtown Bethesda, while the remaining respondents are employed in downtown Bethesda (13%) or are visitors to the area (12%). For a complete demographic breakdown of survey respondents, see Appendix B.

Nearly all respondents indicated that they are aware of BUP. When asked about BUP's main responsibilities, the most common responses were event/festival planning (87%), marketing (85%) and maintenance (72%). Less than half of respondents were aware of BUP's role in economic development (41%), business membership (25%) and legislation (10%).

## RETAIL/RESTAURANTS

The survey sought input on how often people shop and dine in downtown Bethesda, what attracts them there and whether there are sufficient retail and restaurant options. Over 65 percent of survey respondents dine in downtown Bethesda at least once a week and just over half (53%) of respondents shop in downtown Bethesda at least once a week. Most (76%) respondents report shopping or dining in downtown Bethesda because of its location and convenience. Other popular reasons for choosing downtown Bethesda include diverse shopping and dining options (44%), past experience (43%) and unique establishments (29%).

The percent of respondents who shop in downtown Bethesda at least once a week increased from 43% in 2013 to 53% in 2017. The percent of respondents who dine in downtown Bethesda at least once a week increased from 48% to 66%.

The survey also asked respondents to assess whether Bethesda has sufficient dining and shopping options. Most respondents (75%) believed that Bethesda has many *dining* options, but only one-quarter of respondents indicated that downtown Bethesda has many *shopping* options. Another quarter believed that Bethesda does not offer enough shopping options.

## ARTS, CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT

The majority of respondents have attended an artistic or cultural venue in downtown Bethesda. The most common venues that respondents have visited were theater venues, with 58% attending Round House Theatre and 56% visiting Imagination Stage. Over one-third of respondents also take advantage of art galleries (45%) or have been to Gallery B (36%). The Bethesda Row Landmark Gallery is also a popular arts and culture destination among respondents (40%). In addition, several respondents also wrote in that they had attended the Bethesda Blues & Jazz Club.

In comparison to 2013, fewer respondents have visited the Landmark Gallery, but the percent of respondents that have visited Gallery B has more than doubled.

Respondents were divided on whether there are enough entertainment options in downtown Bethesda. Just over one-third believed the entertainment opportunities are sufficient while another third thought there are too few options. The percent of respondents reporting that there are too few entertainment options increased 65% since 2013.



## TRANSPORTATION

When visiting downtown Bethesda, about half of respondents travel by car most often. Nearly 40 percent of respondents walk, while the remaining respondents take the Circulator, Metro or bike.

While only 5 percent of respondents reported using the Circulator as their most frequent method of transportation when visiting downtown Bethesda, 94 percent are aware of the Circulator and just over half (56%) have ridden it before. Compared with 2013, about 7% more respondents are aware of the Circulator and 28% more people have ridden it.

Respondents are most likely to use the Circulator when traveling between destinations downtown. About one-third of respondents have also used the Circulator to travel from home or Metro to their destination. Only 10 percent of respondents use Circulator to commute or to travel from a parking spot/lot to their destination (compared to 20% of respondents in 2013).

About half of respondents reported having trouble parking downtown on occasion. Only 15 percent of respondents reported that they always have trouble parking – a decrease of 50% since 2013. In addition, nearly half of respondents (46%) found the parking fees in downtown reasonable – a 36% increase since 2013 – while 39% found them to be too high.

## EVENTS

When asked about BUP's main responsibilities, the most common response was event/festival planning (87%). All of the respondents were aware of at least one BUP event, though the number of people aware of each individual event varied greatly. The events with the greatest awareness among respondents included Taste of Bethesda (91%), Bethesda Fine Arts Festival (79%), Bethesda Outdoor Movies (79%), Bethesda Summer Concerts (68%), Imagination Bethesda (65%), Bethesda Literary Festival (54%). Less than half of respondents were aware of the remaining BUP events, such as Winter Wonderland, Play in a Day and the Trawick Prize.

Not surprisingly, the events with the greatest awareness among respondents also have the greatest attendance levels among respondents. Over 75% of respondents have attended Taste of Bethesda and 60% have attended the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival. While two-thirds of respondents indicated that they were aware of the outdoor movies, concerts and Imagination Bethesda, however, only one-third have attended these events in the past. The literary festival presents an even starker contrast: 53% of respondents are aware of it, but only 15% have attended it. Less than 10% of respondents have never attended a BUP event.

Respondents learn about BUP events through a variety of media. The most popular is the BUP newsletter (40%). The percent of respondents relying on the BUP email newsletter has increased by 25% since 2013. One-third of respondents find out about events through the BUP hardcopy calendar or a banner on Wisconsin or Woodmont. About one-quarter of respondents learn about BUP events online (including Bethesda.org and Facebook) though social media venues (e.g., Twitter and Instagram) were not selected as significant sources of information about BUP. This may be related to the age of survey respondents: only 13% were age 18 – 34.

When asked about the types of events they would like to see in Bethesda, over 60% indicated an interest in music events, nearly half in food events and 40% expressed interest in art or social events.

## PRIORITIES

The survey respondents were asked what they believe will make Bethesda more livable and vibrant for residents, workers and visitors, as well as what BUP can do to improve Bethesda. Like the feedback from the focus groups and interviews, the most popular response was "more green space." Respondents also highlighted the need for more affordable housing (51%) and different retail/restaurant (46%) and entertainment (38%) options. In contrast to the focus group feedback, 41% of survey respondents highlighted a need for more convenient parking to make Bethesda more livable.

Aligned with respondents' desire for a greener Bethesda, many indicated that BUP should focus its efforts on more green space (57%) or activated public space (42%). Over half were interested in having BUP continue to focus on events, while 41% responded that they would like to see BUP focus on improved pedestrian safety.

## APPENDIX A. FACILITATOR GUIDE

### **Bethesda Urban Partnership Stakeholder Engagement: Facilitator Guide**

#### **Meeting Purpose:**

- To solicit input about Bethesda and BUP from external stakeholders to inform BUP's 5-year strategic plan.
- To understand how stakeholders perceive Bethesda, what improvements they'd like to see, and what they know about BUP and its work.

#### **Facilitators' Role:**

- Explore a range of viewpoints.
- Explore different solutions to address an issue or challenge.
- Explore disagreements; note areas of common ground.

#### **This guide uses color-coded bullet points to keep the conversation on track:**

- Session objectives or information items
- Questions to guide the discussion

Talking points, additional prompts or possible answers. These are used to help guide the conversation. Participants will be allowed an opportunity to talk before these prompts are used.



## Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome & overview (10 min)
  - Purpose of the discussions
  - How information will be used
  - Facilitator's role
  - Introductions
2. Group discussion #1 (50 min)
  - Time to answer questions individually (5 min)
    - What would make Bethesda more livable? An ideal place to work? A great place to work?
  - State of Bethesda discussion (45 min)
3. Group discussion #2 (20 min)
  - BUP Work & Impact
4. Wrap Up (5 min)
  - Reemphasize how information will be used

## Small Group Discussion Topic #1: State of Bethesda

### Objectives

The purpose of this discussion is for the group to:

- Hear different perspectives on the state of Bethesda;
- Understand participants' priorities and interests.

There is no need for participants to reach agreement.

### Questions/Prompts

- In what ways is Bethesda thriving and dynamic?  
*What would strengthen the sense of community in Bethesda?*
- What are your top 3 priorities for Bethesda?  
*What about others? How are your top 3 priorities similar or different?*
- How do you spend your leisure time (e.g., shopping, dining)?  
*Where do you spend your leisure time?*  
*What would make you more likely to spend time in Bethesda?*  
*What amenities or services are you (or your customers) repeatedly looking for?*  
*What are the barriers to spending time in Bethesda?*  
*What have you seen in other neighborhoods or cities that you think could help us with this?*
- How do you get information about what's going on in Bethesda?
- How do you get to and from Bethesda? How do you get around once you're here?  
*Are you aware of the Circulator? Do you use it?*
- If you could change one thing about Bethesda, what would it be?
- I haven't heard anything about \_\_\_\_\_. How are things going with \_\_\_\_\_?  
*Public space/parks*  
*Arts/entertainment*  
*Safety*

*Transportation*

*Affordability*

- These are some of the themes I've heard \_\_\_\_\_, what have you picked up on?

## **Small Group Discussion Topic #2: BUP Work & Impact**

### **Objectives**

The purpose of this session is to:

- Understand how stakeholders view BUP's activities;
- Get input on how BUP can better influence Bethesda.

There is no need for participants to reach agreement.

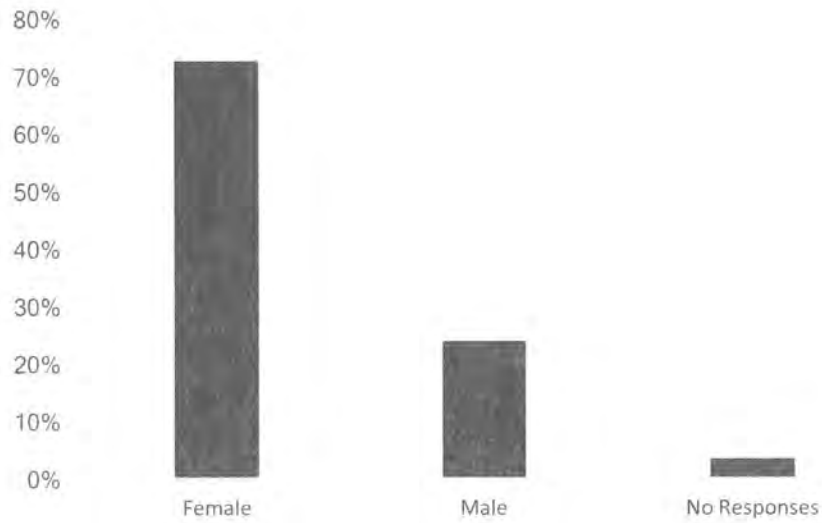
### **Questions/Prompts**

- Are you familiar with BUP?
- How does BUP impact your experience of Bethesda/your business?
- Employers: Are you familiar with BTS?
  - How do you/your employees get transportation/commuting information?*
  - What is your preferred way of receiving information?*
- What is BUP doing well?
  - What could BUP do better? Do more of?*
  - What should BUP be doing less of?*
- What new initiatives could BUP take on that would improve Bethesda?
  - What have you seen other cities or neighborhoods do that BUP could learn from?*
- These are some of the themes I've heard \_\_\_\_\_, what have you picked up on?

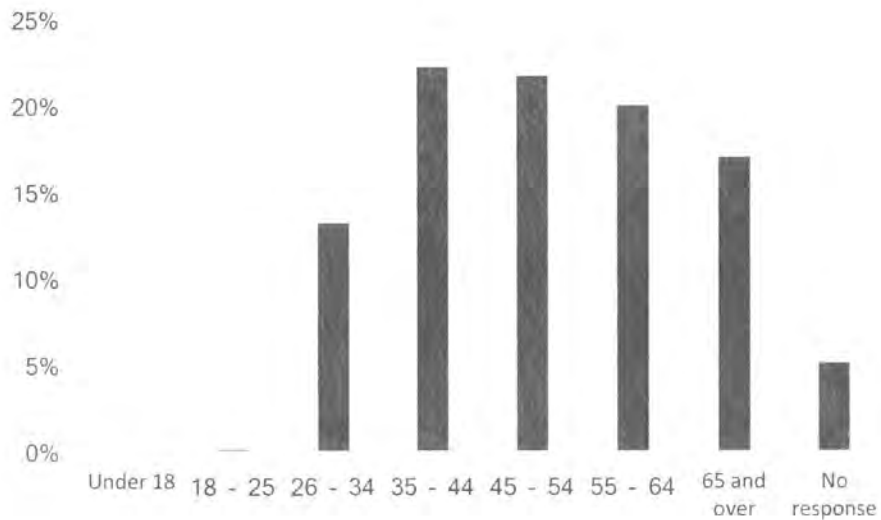
## APPENDIX B. SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The charts below depict the demographic breakdown of survey respondents:

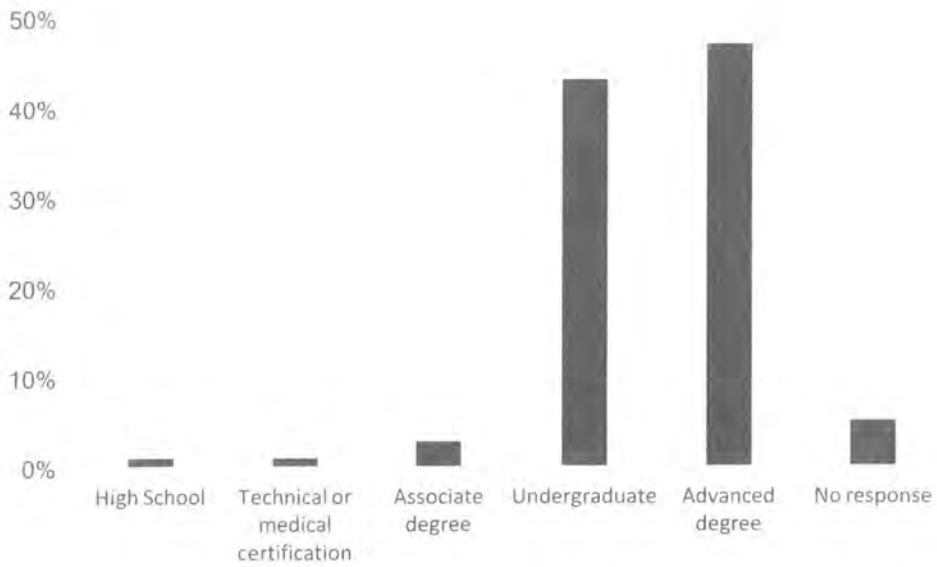
### Gender



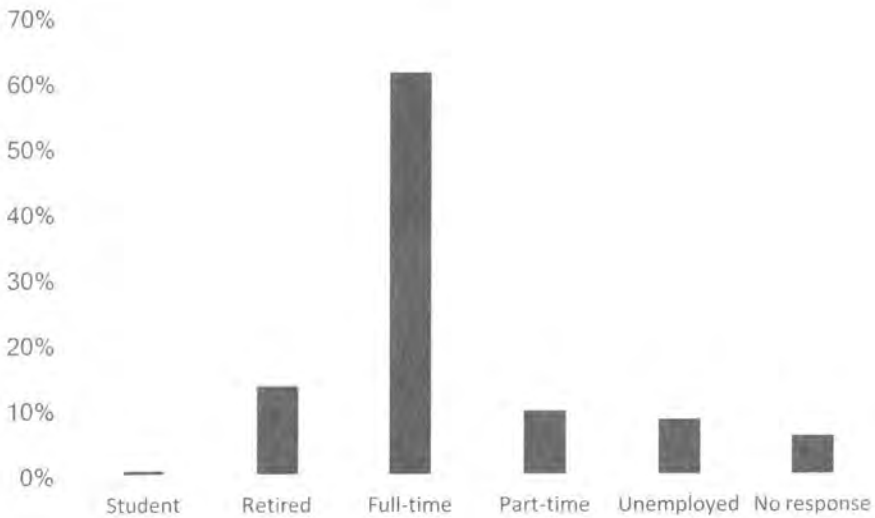
### Age Range



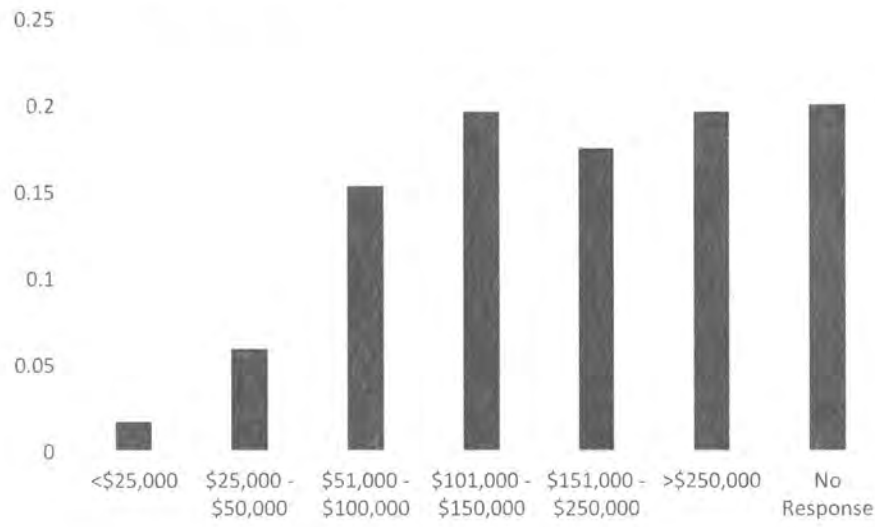
### Highest Level of Education



### Employment Status



### Annual Household Income



## Staff Report on Strategic Initiatives from 2013

<u>Maintenance</u>	<u>2017 Update</u>
<b>Goal:</b> Create a State of the Art Appearance and Easier Customer Navigability for Downtown Bethesda.	
<b>Strategy:</b> Create a Unified and Attractive Downtown Bethesda Streetscape.	
1) Improve street lighting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with state and county on upgrades.</li> </ul>	Through the creation of an accurate GIS layer we have been able to report light outages more efficiently and effectively. The County's new lighting maintenance contractor has been very responsive in repairing outages. Development continues to fill in gaps of lighting with new LED lanterns.
2) Improve streetscape for downtown Bethesda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete streetscape on Wisconsin and Norfolk Avenues.</li> </ul>	This item has been in the County's CIP program for over 20 years. Funding for design and implementation continues to be pushed out to future years as development occurs.
3) Improve downtown Bethesda gateways.	Plantings and signage has been updated and upgraded to improve gateways. New sign and plantings have been installed at the Old Georgetown Rd gateway
4) Coordinate and enhance existing public spaces for gathering: identify new spaces, as appropriate.	BUP is working with MNCPPC as part of the new Bethesda Downtown Master Plan and their Urban Parks initiative to activate parks. BUP co-sponsored the first Yappy Hour event in Elm St Park, and continues to explore more ideas with MNCPPC.
5) Improve walkability and connectivity between corridors.	BUP worked with DOT and MNCPPC staff to get language in the new Bethesda Downtown Master Plan to have the county study the elimination of the one-way couplet on Montgomery, East West, Old Georgetown and Woodmont to improve connectivity.
6) Unify bike racks, newspaper boxes, etc.	<p>BUP has worked with the County DOT to provide a standard bike rack for the downtown, along with some pilot special branded bike racks. All public bike racks in downtown Bethesda are painted red to unify.</p> <p>Newspaper boxes continue to be protected by the First Amendment and attorneys with the Washington Post and USA Today. They have not been amenable to any unified box.</p> <p>BUP is working with MNCPPC as they update the Bethesda Streetscape Guidelines that will be part of the new Bethesda Downtown Master Plan.</p>





	Both entities are working to ensure that all amenities in the plan are consistent and unified.
<b>Strategy: Improve Wayfinding in Downtown Bethesda.</b>	
1) Create a task force to review and improve Wayfinding Signage, street blades and mast arm signs; ensure uniform branding.	BUP created a wayfinding task force that solicited feedback from constituents on the existing street name and trailblazer signs. A decision was made by the full board to return the street blade signs to the County DOT and use their standard, and to eliminate the trailblazer signs because the information on them like wayfinding districts was outdated and irrelevant. The committee decided to wait until the Bethesda Downtown Master Plan was completed to embark on a new wayfinding plan for the entire downtown. In partnership with the Chamber and the County Regional Services Center BUP has started the process of a new wayfinding plan. The initial draft focused on the area around the metro station and concepts for an overall brand identity.
2) Improve signs indicating parking and Metro.	See answer for above #1
3) Add street banners promoting downtown Bethesda and BUP to identify and brand downtown Bethesda.	See answer for above #1
<b>Strategy: Use Technology to Manage Downtown Bethesda's Infrastructure.</b>	
1) Use GIS technology and mapping to manage street lights, interface with BUP website, etc.	BUP has created a robust in-house GIS system. We have created layers for all of the infrastructure that BUP is charged with maintaining. We created an accurate street light layer that the county has incorporated into their online maintenance reporting system. BUP uses the GIS system daily to identify and track issues and work production like brick repairs, snow removal, graffiti, etc. BUP integrates its GIS system with our website to create interactive maps like the Downtown Development Map.
<b>Strategy: Improve Appearance of Bethesda Metro Station and Bus Bay.</b>	In 2016-early 2017, WMATA replaced the three escalators to the Bethesda Metro, added additional lighting at those escalators and on the train platform level. In 2012 - 2013, WMATA completely rehabilitated the Bethesda elevator. BUP and the A&E Board added artistic murals to the Bethesda Bus Bay area to improve the Metro gateway to Bethesda. Lighting to the tunnel to



	7475 Wisconsin Avenue was improved. A water leak at the escalator entrance, dripping down on all escalator riders, was repaired by WMATA and the owner of the ceiling at the Metro escalator.
1) Work with WMATA Task Force on completion of proposed improvements to Bethesda Metro station.	BUP continues to participate in the WMATA task force. WMATA has put a hold on all improvements to any station as they complete their safe track work. BUP continues to work with WMATA and the private sector to make improvements to the Metro Station, including lighting, signage and power washing.
2) Improve signage and directional information for Metro riders.	See answer above to wayfinding #1
3) Add artwork to the Metro station.	BUP partnered with Brookfield Properties to commission the painting of a mural at the Bethesda Metro Bus Bay.
<b><u>Marketing and Communications</u></b>	
<b>Goal:</b> Create and Implement a Successful Marketing Plan to Ensure that Bethesda is at the Regional Forefront of Attracting Customers and Businesses.	
<b>Strategy:</b> Enhance and Build Downtown Bethesda's Brand.	
1) Create a marketing campaign featuring downtown Bethesda as the best regional downtown and destination for dining, shopping and the arts.	Marketing videos featuring downtown Bethesda restaurants and retailers were created in 2016. These videos are promoted via social media and shared with developers, conference organizers and more.
2) Implement more signage/branding within downtown Bethesda promoting Bethesda and the Bethesda Urban Partnership.	Thirteen sculptural "B's" were fabricated and installed in November 2016. The B's were placed in high traffic locations such as the Metro, Bethesda Row and Veterans Park in addition to near arts organizations such as Round House Theatre, Imagination Stage, Bethesda Blues & Jazz Club, etc.
3) Promote 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bethesda Urban Partnership in 2014.	BUP celebrated its 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary with a specially designed logo, additional branding at events and with a special reception featuring past Board members and Board chairs, County Executive Isiah Leggett and more.
<b>Strategy:</b> Promote the Economic Viability of Downtown Bethesda.	
1) Market downtown Bethesda to potential new retail and commercial business.	Marriott International announced in July 2017 that they would relocate and build a new



	corporate headquarters in downtown Bethesda scheduled for completion in 2022. Thirty-five hundred new employees will work in downtown Bethesda as a result of this move. Additionally, a specific video promoting the amenities for downtown Bethesda videos was created to market Bethesda to new businesses.
2) Add more statistical data about downtown Bethesda to website and marketing materials.	
<b>Strategy:</b> Improve Communication to Constituents.	
1) More outreach to local businesses, retailers, property managers and arts and entertainment organizations.	BUP continues to promote local businesses, arts organizations via social media and partner on Bethesda events.
2) Increase use of technology and social media.	BUP's social media presence has grown on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and weekly email outreach.
3) Update BUP website; create mobile application for smartphones.	BUP's website was updated in 2012 with a new look and additional user-friendly features.
4) Increase promotion of parking options, rates and payment options.	BUP's new website features a comprehensive parking map.
5) Use of interactive maps on BUP's website showing parking, restaurants, shops and more.	New mapping technology shows individual restaurants and retailers and their proximity to nearby parking.
<b>Strategy:</b> Develop relationship with Nearby Constituents.	
1) More outreach to nearby "Bethesda customers" at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, National Institute of Health, Suburban Hospital, etc.	BUP has participate in the annual National Night Out event at the Naval Support Activity Bethesda since 2015 providing information on downtown Bethesda to the event attendees as well as facilitating donated lunch from six Bethesda restaurants. Additionally, NSAB has annually participated in Imagination Bethesda and Taste of Bethesda.
<b><u>Transportation</u></b>	
<b>Goal:</b> A Transportation System that has Complementary Vehicular and Non-Vehicular Options.	
<b>Strategy:</b> Improve Pedestrian Safety.	
1) Improve condition of current crosswalks with more frequent re-striping.	In 2015, BTS conducted an inventory of all painted crosswalks and provided this to MCDOT for repainting of those intersections.
2) Work with Montgomery County to ensure enforcement of traffic laws.	Montgomery County Police provide to the BTS Advisory Committee and community regular updates of their enforcement activities, including





	pedestrian safety, seat belt, distracted driving and speed enforcement in downtown Bethesda. The second District Police Commander attends the BTS Advisory Committee meetings as a non-voting member.
<b>Strategy: Improve Non-Single Occupancy Vehicular Options</b>	
1) Research/Consider expansion of Circulator route; Addition of new vehicles.	In 2014, BUP conducted a Circulator survey, receiving responses on the service and collecting information on suggested improvements including an expanded route. The survey was distributed widely in the community and on the Circulator buses. The result included an expansion of the route northward to Battery Lane and to Bradley Boulevard in the south end of Bethesda. New signs and marketing materials were created and distributed and artistic poetry benches were relocated to the new stops.
2) Improve Bicycle Access into downtown Bethesda.	The Bethesda Trolley Trail was widened and a wayside with a repair station was added, a bicycle connection from Rockville to the Capital Crescent Trail at Glenbrook was added, bicycle facilities were added at Little Falls Parkway, bicycle wayfinding was added from Fernwood to the Westfield Montgomery Mall. Improvements in downtown Bethesda are scheduled to come with the approved Bethesda Sector Plan and the Purple Line. The addition of over 10 Capital Bikeshare stations in Bethesda has improved cycling options.
3) Market Capital Bikeshare program.	BTS promotes Capital Bikeshare at weekly commuter events in office building lobbies by handing out free trial coupons. During Earth Day each April, BTS bring the Capital Bikeshare demonstration bike to each event, allowing people to test ride the bike. BTS has hosted "Capital Bikeshare Birthday Parties" and employer worksite Capital Bikeshare promotions to encourage employees to sign up for their employer corporate bikeshare plan.
4) Encourage car sharing and Flexcar.	Zip Car is the County's contractor for car sharing services. BTS promotes car sharing, including Zip Car at all events and on our website. We list the locations of those vehicle in Bethesda.
<b>Strategy: Ease Traffic Congestion.</b>	
1) Educate public on non-vehicular options.	BTS continues to host weekly commuter information events in office building lobbies and



	worksites throughout downtown Bethesda, promoting transportation options, and answering questions and providing door-to-door routing to commuters. BTS created a new, easy to navigate website in 2016. BTS updated its "Biking to Bethesda brochure and map in 2014, and its "Walking in Bethesda" brochure and map in 2016. These are distributed by BTS and BUP. BTS created and distributed a easy to read "SafeTrack Guide" when WMATA implemented a long term service plan for the rail system, which created disruptions for commuters.
2) Increase marketing efforts of Bethesda Transportation Solutions.	The approved Bethesda Sector Plan will permit BTS to market to Bethesda residents, this will greatly increase our outreach influence. BTS always adds new features to existing events, such as adding suggested bus and walking routes to the 2013 Walk & Ride Challenge and a "Bethesda History Walk" to the Walk & Ride Challenge in 2017 and adding a "Bike to Work Day Photo Challenge" in 2015, where participants shared photos of the Bethesda Pit Stop and received prizes.
3) Increase "connectivity" between all parts of downtown Bethesda.	In 2013, a new crosswalk with pedestrian refuge island was added on Woodmont Avenue near Veterans Park. In 2014, SHA resurfaced Wisconsin Avenue, adding additional countdown timers and cameras to assess real time traffic conditions on Wisconsin Avenue. In 2015, a pedestrian "HAWK" (high-intensity activated crosswalk) was added at Wisconsin Avenue and Stanford Street. In 2016, SHA added mid-block pedestrian crossings on Wisconsin Avenue and Chase Avenue and Middleton Lane. In 2017, SHA added a "HAWK" signal at B-CC High School. Bicycle connectivity was added just outside downtown Bethesda and as stated is expected in the near future with the new Bethesda Sector Plan.
4) Encourage county to do a traffic light study.	See #3 above.
<b>Strategy:</b> Monitor Development and Traffic Plans that Impact Downtown Bethesda.	
1) Continue to attend The Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber, Montgomery County Park and Planning and community meetings.	BTS continues to attend Greater Bethesda Chamber and other area Chamber events and meetings to network and speak with employers about transportation options. BTS staff have



	been Next Exec representatives on the Chamber Board of Directors and have been selected for Leadership Montgomery's Emerging Leaders program. BTS Director is a member of the Planning Department's Bicycle Master Plan Advisory Group and the Purple Line Community Advisory Team.
2) Monitor and provide feedback on the proposed Bus Rapid Transit plans.	BTS attends and promotes Bus Rapid Transit meetings and public outreach events. The BTS Advisory Committee receives updates from the BRT Project Manager for the County.
<b><u>Arts &amp; Entertainment</u></b>	
<b>Goal:</b> Ensure that Bethesda is a vibrant Arts & Entertainment District that attracts artists, arts patrons and arts organizations.	
<b>Strategy:</b> Support Individual Arts & Entertainment Organizations	
1) Promote events held at individual arts venues.	BUP promotes the theatre, galleries and other arts events in downtown Bethesda via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and our online and hard copy Events Calendars.
2) Host networking events for arts venues in Bethesda A&E District which will connect them to collaborate on shared ideas and marketing efforts.	
3) Reach out to new, potential arts organizations to open in downtown Bethesda.	BUP opened Studio B in 2014 with the support of Brookfield Properties. Studio B is home to four visual artists who create and sell their artwork in this space. BUP will also operate a new arts studio space at the Cheval Condominiums in downtown Bethesda in 2018. There will be space for four to eight artists.
<b>Strategy:</b> Facilitate Events to Appeal to Bethesda's Many Audiences.	
1) Host events that appeal to different age groups and diverse audiences.	BUP added the beer and wine to its summer concert series and held the first "Yappy Hour" in October 2017 which featured two pop-up dog parks, live music and Bethesda restaurants that provided food, beer and wine.
2) Market events to specific age groups and audiences.	BUP and the A&E District produce annual events that appeal to people of all ages so that we are reaching all of the potential audiences for downtown Bethesda.
<b>Strategy:</b> Add more Art Elements to Downtown Bethesda.	



1) Add more public art in public spaces and on private commercial buildings.	BUP and the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District facilitated two large public art murals. In 2015, a new mural on the Capital Crescent Trail Retaining Wall was installed. In 2016, local artist Juan Pineda painted several areas of the Metro Bus Bay.
2) Open artist studio spaces in downtown Bethesda.	BUP opened Studio B in 2014 with the support of Brookfield Properties. Studio B is home to four visual artists who create and sell their artwork in this space. BUP will also operate a new arts studio space at the Cheval Condominiums in downtown Bethesda in 2018. There will be space for four to eight artists.
3) Open a community theatre where local dance and theatre companies can rent the space to host events.	The new Downtown Bethesda Plan has included the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District's desire for a community theatre that can be rented and used by local dance, theatre and chorale groups.
4) Support other arts groups in producing and hosting arts and entertainment events.	The Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District has supported local artist Elyse Harrison with her new outdoor art mural, as well as promotes arts events throughout downtown Bethesda.
5) Continue to host monthly visual arts exhibitions.	Gallery B welcomes new artists every month for four-week exhibitions. Since Gallery B opened in 2011, more than 300 local artists have been featured. Additionally, Studio B hosts monthly exhibits of their resident artists as well.





## Constant Contact Survey Results

Survey Name: Sep 03 2017 Survey

Response Status: Partial & Completed

Filter: None

6/27/2018 11:50 AM EDT

\*Using the following list, please select one option that best describes your relationship to downtown Bethesda.


Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I am a resident of downtown Bethesda.			79	33.7 %
I am a resident of a Bethesda neighborhood outside of downtown Bethesda.			96	41.0 %
I am employed in downtown Bethesda.			31	13.2 %
I am a visitor from within the Greater D.C. or Montgomery County area.			24	10.2 %
I am a tourist or visitor from outside the area.			4	1.7 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
		Totals	234	100%

\*Are you aware of the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP)?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			232	99.1 %
No			2	<1 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
		Totals	234	100%



\*In your opinion, what are the main responsibilities of the Bethesda Urban Partnership? (Select all that apply.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Marketing downtown Bethesda			199	85.0 %
Event/festival planning (i.e. Taste of Bethesda)			204	87.1 %
Maintenance (i.e. landscaping, trash pick up)			169	72.2 %
Legislation			24	10.2 %
Economic Development			97	41.4 %
Business membership			60	25.6 %
Other			14	5.9 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*How often do you dine in downtown Bethesda?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Several times per week			70	29.9 %
Once a week			84	35.8 %
Once a month			47	20.0 %
A few times per year			32	13.6 %
No Response(s)			1	<1 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*How often do you shop in downtown Bethesda?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Several times per week			59	25.2 %
Once a week			64	27.3 %
Once a month			42	17.9 %
A few times per year			68	29.0 %
No Response(s)			1	<1 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>



\*When visiting downtown Bethesda, what is the transportation option you use most often? (Please select one.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Car			122	52.1 %
Metro			4	1.7 %
Bus			2	<1 %
Bethesda Circulator			13	5.5 %
Walking			89	38.0 %
Biking			4	1.7 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Are you aware of the Bethesda Circulator?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			221	94.4 %
No			13	5.5 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Have you ever ridden the Bethesda Circulator?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			131	55.9 %
No			103	44.0 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>




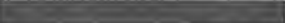


For what purpose have you ridden the Bethesda Circulator? (Check all that apply.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
To/from work (commuting)			15	11.5 %
From parking to destination			13	10.0 %
From Metro to destination			38	29.2 %
From home to destination			48	36.9 %
Between destinations			89	68.4 %
All of the above			5	3.8 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>130</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*What is your opinion of the parking options in downtown Bethesda?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I never have trouble parking in downtown Bethesda.			50	21.3 %
I sometimes have trouble parking in downtown Bethesda.			122	52.1 %
I always have trouble parking in downtown Bethesda.			34	14.5 %
I have no opinion of the parking options in downtown Bethesda.			5	2.1 %
I don't park in downtown Bethesda. I take Metro, walk or bike into downtown.			23	9.8 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>












\*What is your opinion of the parking fees in downtown Bethesda? (Parking fees in Bethesda's County Lots/Garages ranges from \$1.00 - \$1.25 per hour; on-street parking is \$2.25 per hour.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I find the parking fees too low in downtown Bethesda.			2	<1 %
I find the fees for parking reasonable in downtown Bethesda.			108	46.1 %
I find the parking fees are too high in downtown Bethesda.			92	39.3 %
I have no opinion of the parking fees in downtown Bethesda.			32	13.6 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>





\*What prompts you to shop or dine in downtown Bethesda (Select up to three choices.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Location/convenience			179	76.4 %
I reside in downtown Bethesda.			81	34.6 %
I am employed in downtown Bethesda.			43	18.3 %
Past experience			102	43.5 %
Diverse choices			104	44.4 %
Unique establishments			69	29.4 %
Word of mouth			18	7.6 %
Advertising			6	2.5 %
Visiting friends or family			28	11.9 %
Social media			7	2.9 %
I do not shop or dine in downtown Bethesda.			4	1.7 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*What is your opinion of dining options in downtown Bethesda?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Downtown Bethesda offers many dining options for dining out.			176	75.2 %
Downtown Bethesda offers an average number of options for dining out.			36	15.3 %
Downtown Bethesda does not offer enough dining options.			13	5.5 %
I have no opinion on the dining options in Bethesda.			9	3.8 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>



\*What is your opinion of shopping options in downtown Bethesda?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Downtown Bethesda offers many options for shopping.			63	26.9 %
Downtown Bethesda offers an average number of options for shopping.			97	41.4 %
Downtown Bethesda does not offer enough options for shopping.			54	23.0 %
I have no opinion of the shopping options in Bethesda.			19	8.1 %
No Response(s)			1	<1 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Have you ever attended an artistic or cultural venue in downtown Bethesda (theater, art gallery, arts educations, etc.)?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Yes			186	79.4 %
No			48	20.5 %
No Response(s)			0	0.0 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

What venue(s) did you visit? (Select all that apply.)














Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Arts Education (i.e. art class, dance class, etc.)			36	19.3 %
Art Gallery (i.e. Waverly Street Gallery)			84	45.1 %
Bethesda Row Landmark Gallery			76	40.8 %
Gallery B			67	36.0 %
Round House Theatre			108	58.0 %
Imagination Stage			105	56.4 %
The Writer's Center			50	26.8 %
Studio B			32	17.2 %
Other			16	8.6 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>100%</b>



What is your opinion of the entertainment options in downtown Bethesda?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
There are too few options.			89	38.0 %
They are geared towards limited age groups.			26	11.1 %
They are sufficient.			84	35.8 %
I have no opinion of the entertainment options in downtown Bethesda.			27	11.5 %
No Response(s)			8	3.4 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Which of the following Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) events are you aware of? (Select all that apply.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Taste of Bethesda			213	91.0 %
Imagination Bethesda (Children's Festival)			152	64.9 %
Bethesda Fine Arts Festival			186	79.4 %
Bethesda Literary Festival			126	53.8 %
Bethesda's Winter Wonderland			78	33.3 %
Play in a Day			74	31.6 %
Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards concert			46	19.6 %
Bethesda Film Fest			68	29.0 %
Bethesda Outdoor Movies			186	79.4 %
Bethesda Summer Concerts (Veterans Park)			158	67.5 %
The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards exhibition			88	37.6 %
Bethesda Painting Awards exhibition			46	19.6 %
All of the above			32	13.6 %
None of the above			0	0.0 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>



\*Which downtown Bethesda events have you attended? (Select all that apply.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Taste of Bethesda			181	77.3 %
Imagination Bethesda (Children's Festival)			79	33.7 %
Bethesda Fine Arts Festival			141	60.2 %
Bethesda Literary Festival			35	14.9 %
Bethesda's Winter Wonderland			34	14.5 %
Play in a Day			23	9.8 %
Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards			10	4.2 %
Bethesda Film Fest			23	9.8 %
Bethesda Outdoor Movies			79	33.7 %
Bethesda Summer Concerts (Veterans Park)			84	35.8 %
The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards exhibition			31	13.2 %
Bethesda Painting Awards exhibition			19	8.1 %
All of the above			4	1.7 %
None of the above			18	7.6 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

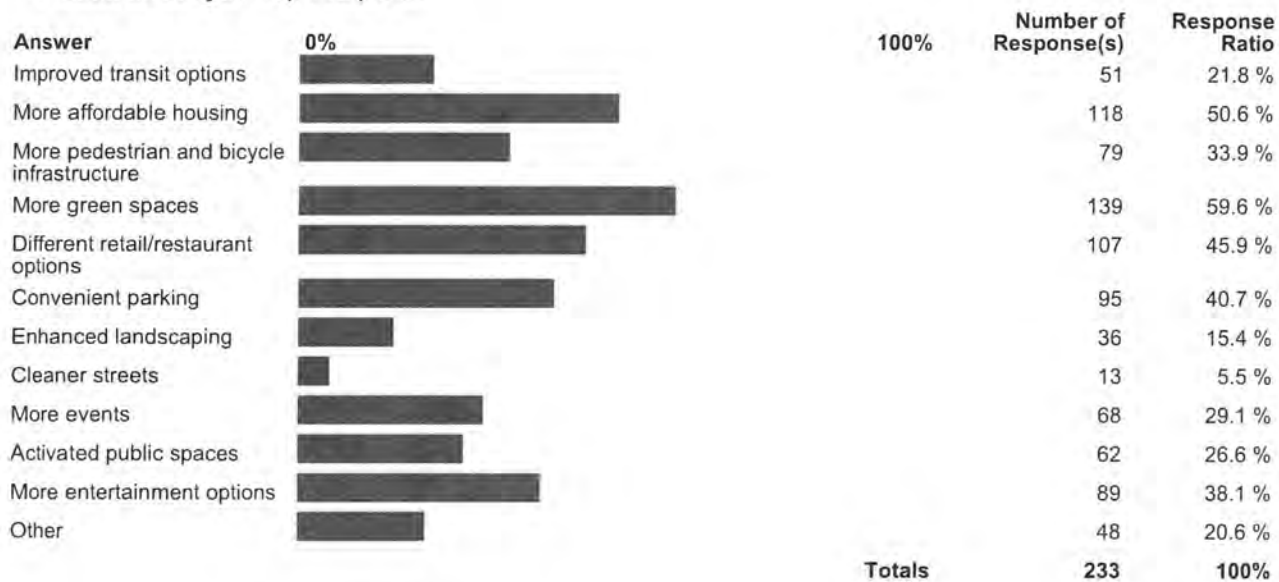
How did you hear about these events? (Select all that apply.)

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Bethesda.org website			60	26.0 %
Online news source (online newspaper, online events calendar, etc.)			66	28.6 %
Radio			6	2.6 %
Television			2	<1 %
Facebook (BUP page)			47	20.4 %
Instagram			4	1.7 %
Twitter			10	4.3 %
A friend			37	16.0 %
BUP Events Calendar (hard copy)			74	32.1 %
BUP email newsletter			102	44.3 %
Passing by event location			62	26.9 %
Banner on Wisconsin or Woodmont Avenue			76	33.0 %
Other			17	7.3 %
<b>Totals</b>			<b>230</b>	<b>100%</b>





\*What would make downtown Bethesda more livable and vibrant for residents, employees and visitors?  
Please select your top five picks.



Where should the Bethesda Urban Partnership focus its efforts to improve Bethesda? Please select your top four answers.





What types of events would you like to see in downtown Bethesda? Select three.

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Food			110	48.4 %
Music			145	63.8 %
Family-friendly			74	32.5 %
Art			93	40.9 %
Social			90	39.6 %
Bethesda doesn't need more events			24	10.5 %
Other			18	7.9 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### TextBlock:

The information below will help us organize survey answers and provide important demographic information, but is not required to participate in the survey..

Gender:

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Female			170	72.6 %
Male			56	23.9 %
No Response(s)			8	3.4 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

What is your age range?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Under 18			0	0.0 %
18 - 25			1	<1 %
26 - 34			31	13.2 %
35 - 44			52	22.2 %
45 - 54			51	21.7 %
55 - 64			47	20.0 %
65 and over			40	17.0 %
No Response(s)			12	5.1 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>



### What is your level of education?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
High School diploma			2	<1 %
Technical or medical certification program			2	<1 %
Association degree (2-year program)			7	2.9 %
Undergraduate degree (4-year program)			101	43.1 %
Advanced degree (master's or doctorate)			110	47.0 %
No Response(s)			12	5.1 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

### What is your employment status?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
I am a student.			1	<1 %
I am retired.			32	13.6 %
I am employed full-time.			144	61.5 %
I am employed part-time.			23	9.8 %
I am not currently employed.			20	8.5 %
No Response(s)			14	5.9 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>

### What is your annual household income?

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Under \$25,000			4	1.7 %
\$25,000 - \$50,000			14	5.9 %
\$51,000 - \$100,000			36	15.3 %
\$101,000 - \$150,000			46	19.6 %
\$151,000 - \$250,000			41	17.5 %
More than \$250,000			46	19.6 %
No Response(s)			47	20.0 %
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>100%</b>





## FY18 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ROSTER

### Executive Committee

<p><b><u>Chair</u></b>  <b><u>Jack Alexander</u></b>  <b><u>AMR Commercial, LLC</u></b>            Chamber of Commerce Rep.            4849 Rugby Avenue, #200, Bethesda, MD 20814            (W) 301-961-9696; (F) 301-656-7551            Email: <a href="mailto:jalexander@amrcommercial.com">jalexander@amrcommercial.com</a>            Term 2 ending: October 2019</p>	<p><b><u>Vice Chair</u></b>  <b><u>Robert Donohoe, Jr.</u></b>  <b><u>Donohoe Companies, Inc.</u></b>            Optional Method Developer Rep.            5210 Carlton Street, Bethesda, MD 20816            (W) 202-821-8797            Email: <a href="mailto:robertd@donohoe.com">robertd@donohoe.com</a>            Term 2 ending: October 2020</p>
<p><b><u>Secretary</u></b>  <b><u>Deborah Michaels</u></b>            Residential Rep. from Neighborhood in            Close Proximity to Urban District            8619 Terrace Garden Way, Bethesda, MD 20814            (H) 301-656-3610            Email: <a href="mailto:damiachs@verizon.net">damiachs@verizon.net</a>            Term 1 ending: October 2018</p>	<p><b><u>Treasurer</u></b>  <b><u>Len Simon</u></b>  <b><u>Simon &amp; Company</u></b>            Residential Rep. from Planning Area            1660 L Street, NW, Suite 501            (W) 202-659-2229; (F) 202-659-5234            Email: <a href="mailto:len.simon@simoncompany.com">len.simon@simoncompany.com</a>            Term 1 ending: October 2020</p>

### Board Members

<p><b><u>Elaine Joost</u></b>            Residential Rep. within the Urban District            4801 Hampden Lane, Apt. 803, Bethesda, MD 20814            (C) 202-378-3987; (H) 301-657-1690            Email: <a href="mailto:econojoost@msn.com">econojoost@msn.com</a>            Term 2 ending: October 2017</p>	<p><b><u>Gregory Rooney</u></b>  <b><u>The Bernstein Companies</u></b>            Optional Method Developer Rep.            3229 K Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20007            (W) 202-478-7579; (C) 202-422-1855            Email: <a href="mailto:grooney@thebernsteincompanies.com">grooney@thebernsteincompanies.com</a>            Term 1 ending: October 2018</p>
<p><b><u>Jane Fairweather</u></b>  <b><u>Jane Fairweather Team, Inc.</u></b>            Small Business Rep.            4709 Maple Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814            (W) 240-223-4000            Email: <a href="mailto:jane@janefairweather.com">jane@janefairweather.com</a>            Term 1 ending: October 2018</p>	<p><b><u>Patrick O'Neil</u></b>  <b><u>Lerch, Early &amp; Brewer</u></b>            BCC Chamber of Commerce Rep.            3 Bethesda Metro Center, Bethesda MD 20814            (W) 301-657-0738            Email: <a href="mailto:ploneil@lercheearly.com">ploneil@lercheearly.com</a>            Term 2 ending: October 2018</p>
<p><b><u>Andrew Jones</u></b>  <b><u>Brookfield Property Partners</u></b>            Optional Method Developer Rep.            750 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001            (W) 202-467-7707            Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.jones@brookfield.com.com">andrew.jones@brookfield.com.com</a>            Term 1 ending: October 2019</p>	<p><b><u>Samir Paul</u></b>            Citizens Advisory Board Rep.            7171 Woodmont Avenue, #208            Bethesda, MD 20814            (C) 240-888-8655            Email: <a href="mailto:samir.paul@gmail.com">samir.paul@gmail.com</a>            Term 1 ending: October 2019</p>
<p><b><u>Rick Ammirato</u></b>            Executive Director            Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.            7700 Old Georgetown Road., Bethesda, MD 20814            (W) 301-215-6660; (F) 301-215-6664            Email: <a href="mailto:rammirato@bethesda.org">rammirato@bethesda.org</a></p>	<p><b><u>Kenneth B. Hartman</u></b>            Ex-Officio: County Executive Rep.            Bethesda Chevy Chase Services Center            4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814            (W) 240-777-8200; (F) 240-777-8211            Email: <a href="mailto:kenneth.hartman@montgomerycountymd.gov">kenneth.hartman@montgomerycountymd.gov</a></p>

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**7700 Old Georgetown Road**  
**Bethesda, Maryland 20814**  
**(301) 215-6660, fax (301) 215-6664**



## **Appendix D. List of OLO Interviews**

Casey Anderson, Montgomery County Planning Board

Nancy Ambrose, Montgomery Parks

Richard Bingham, Silver Spring Regional Services Center

Joe Callaway, Wheaton Urban District, Mid-County Regional Services Center

Dan Corwin, Federal Realty Investment Trust

Robert Donohue, Jr., Bethesda Urban Partnership Board of Directors

Jane Fairweather, Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District Board of Directors

Ken Hartman, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center

Leslie Howerton, Montgomery County Planning Department

Robert Kronenberg, Montgomery County Planning Department

Capt. Paul Liquorie, Bethesda 2<sup>nd</sup> Police District

Veronique Marier, Bethesda Green

John Mendez, Bethesda Cares

John Nissell, Deputy Director for Operations, Montgomery Parks

Corey Orlosky, Office of Management and Budget

Reemberto Rodriguez, Silver Spring Regional Services Center

Ned Sherburne, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad

David Steckel, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services

Carol Trawick, The Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation

John Tschiderer, Federal Realty Investment Trust

Emil Wolanin, Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations, Department of Transportation

Gwen Wright, Montgomery County Planning Department