

SILVER SPRING REGIONAL AREA

Monthly Report FEBRUARY 2016 *Reemberto Rodriguez, Director*

[1] Community Issues

Snow aftermaths: Active area residents and businesses were instrumental in helping us stay on the many situations that came up during and after the snow storm. Social media was extensively used by both the County and the citizenry to help mitigate many of the issues. Given much of the Silver Spring Region's walkability, many of the issues dealt with pedestrian accessibility not only downtown, but in the various smaller commercial hubs and surrounding neighborhoods. Many of the concerns, inquires, and complaints seem to be regarding the scheduling of and quality control of the plowing contractors.

Budget Forum: There were over 200 participants in attendance, representing at least 10 civics, 25 organizations, and all Advisory Groups; plus, approximately 15 County staff. Over 20 questions, concerns, and support statements were expressed. Most focused on schools or housing and seniors.

Collaborative County Meetings: We are working with various County agencies and community groups in these two issues which have been identified by the community as needing focused attention.

- *Old Silver Spring Library:* The County will be presenting an update on the future of the old Silver Spring Library site. Through the years the community has consistently expressed the expectation that the future use of the site incorporate a multi-generational component. A Request for Proposal (RFP) that will bring this community vision to reality will be released in the next few weeks. While the selection of the winning bidder and the subsequent development process gears up over the next couple of years, the County will temporarily and transitionally use the space as a community asset. A Q&A session will follow a brief presentation from various County agencies.
- *BiPPA:* Thanks to the diligent work of the County's DOT, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area initiative is moving forward with specific projects. One example is the Spring St. / Cedar Lane separated bike lanes, which is set to begin construction in a few months. A meeting with area neighbors will also include updates on other bike projects in the area.

Collaborative Workshops: We have developed these two workshops in collaborations with others. Both intend to increase the capacity of their respective target audience (non-profits and small merchants and entrepreneurs) through training and networking.

- *Evaluation Workshop:* In collaboration with the Volunteer Center, this will be a workshop on evaluation, focusing on identifying and measuring your key outcomes of success. The workshop is designed to help you think about evaluation in a more systematic way, and to prepare you for applying for grants and using evaluation information to improve your services.
- *Small Commercial Hubs Workshop Series:* The Silver Spring Regional Center and CASA invite small business owners, merchants, and entrepreneurs (and other stakeholders) in the Region's smaller commercial hubs to a series of facilitated meetings where we will explore ways to strengthen the capacity to survive and prosper in times of change.

Planning Efforts:

- The Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan public hearing is set for February 11th; and,
- The Planning staff will brief the Urban District Advisory Committee on the proposal to pursue an update to the South Silver Spring Master Plan.

[2] Advisory Groups & Related Activities

The four key Advisory Groups in Silver Spring (listed below) have identified their individual budget priorities. They have also come together to identify practical and pragmatic priorities they have in common, including:

1. Support for a more robust VanGo, ideally with distinctive buses;
2. Ensuring that the proceeds from the local Parking Lot District remain in the area;
3. Affirmation of the work of the Red Shirts as a major contributing element to the success of downtown; and,
4. Pursue a new system of pedestrian scale “wayfinding” signs/

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (Monday, February 8th)

In January most of the meeting was devoted to identifying – together with the community – budget priorities be presented at the Budget Forum. These will be considered further – and a formal letter adopted – at the February meeting.

Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee (TBA)

The Committee met with other Advisory groups to expand on their key emerging budget priority: The need for maintenance of the major art and public venues – i.e.: the AFI and Civic Building in particular. They will meet again at a TBA to adopt the letter of advice.

Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee (Thursday, January 21st)

In January, the Committee heard from Steve Silverman regarding the pursuit of a State enabling legislation that would reduce the percent of property owners required to approve the establishment of a Business Improvement District from 80 to 51%. They also hosted members from the Area’s other Advisory Group (Citizens Advisory Board, Transportation Management Advisory Group, and the Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee) to identify common budget priorities – see introductory paragraph above. In February they will hear from the Planning Board regarding revisiting the South Silver Spring plans.

Silver Spring Transportation Management Advisory Committee (Thursday, February 11th)

In January the TMD adopted their budget priorities to be presented to the County Executive. The Agenda for February is not yet set.

Countywide Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (Thursday, February 4th)

The Committee will hear a presentation on “Vision Zero” and discuss the possibility of a resolution supporting this approach to pedestrian safety being taken in D.C.