

SILVER SPRING REGIONAL AREA

Monthly Report JUNE 2016 *Reemberto Rodriguez, Director*

[1] COMMUNITY ISSUES

Homelessness:

We've held a series of meetings with the providers, HHS, the Police, County venue managers, and our own Urban District to strategize how to address the going concern of the perceived higher presence of homelessness and street people throughout downtown. We continue addressing the situation through a concerted, coordinated effort, with increased communication via an every-other-week conference call to 'check in' on issues and progress; and – through the leadership of the Chamber – meeting every month 'face-to-face'.

Old Silver Spring Library:

Under the leadership of the Department of General Services, we've convened two meetings of an appointed Stakeholders Group to provide advice on certain elements of a Request for Proposal that would seek to repurpose the old Silver Spring Library site. This approach was a response to advice expressed at a community meeting earlier this year. The process builds on years of expressed community consensus that there is a need for increased multi-generational services in (or near) downtown Silver Spring. As with any public property being considered for redevelopment, affordable housing – and in this case particularly elderly affordable housing – is also under consideration. The Group will meet again later in the summer.

Live Music and Performing Arts:

It is becoming increasingly evident that downtown Silver Spring's allure for music and the performing arts is growing and making the area appealing to an increasing number of entities in the field. Many restaurants have expanded their offering of live music to enliven the ambiance of their establishment, thus enhancing the nighttime economy and increasing the number of people on the street later at night. Other than the established major venues and concert series (AFI, The Fillmore, the Blackbox, Summer Concert Series), recent happenings are accentuating this trend:

- Levine Music is set to move to the new Library in the Fall;
- The Guitar Store just announced it is moving into Ellsworth Place (the old CitiPlace);
- The Violin Store recently opened in the old Blair Mansion, down by Jessup Park;
- ClassActs opened its new at Cameron and Ramsey;
- Highwood Theater and Urban Nation continue enlivening Fenton Village;
- SSTCi's programming provides ambiance performances on Veterans Plaza every Tuesday and Wednesday evening; and,
- Peterson Compancy's programming on Ellsworth (by the Fountain) has expanded to include a 'lunch lounge'.

On any given weekend:

To place the level of activity in downtown in perspective, this is (some of) what is going on in one given weekend - June 9-11: The Fillmore expects sellout crowds each night; ArtStream has its opening weekend for Tumbleweed at the Silver Spring Balckbox; the AFI hosts the Caribbean Film Festival; the Library has its own Caribbean Festival; And on Sunday, theTaste of Jamaica comes to Veterans Plaza; the merchants on Bonifant are having the first ever 'Commercial Block Party'; and in Takoma Park, the Jazz Festival is going on. (And, up next week: The Blues Festival and the start of our Summer Concert Series which runs through early August.)

NOTE: Purple Line and BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) issues – and other transportation issues - were included in last month's report.

[2] ADVISORY GROUP ACTIVITIES

In June, all three major Advisory Groups meet the same week, making it a good way to end these civic engagement processes for the summer. (They will reconvene in August / September.)

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (Monday, June 13)

In May, the SSCAB did a special gathering focusing on the history of Silver Spring to better understand today's issues. (They also consider draft by-laws revisions to be submitted to the County Attorney for approval.)

In June, the SSCAB will continue the practice of occasionally meeting in the community. They will meet in Takoma Park. It is expected that the Takoma Park Mayor and some of the Councilmembers will be in attendance. Expected topics that may surface include the moving of the Adventist Hospital to White Oak; Purple Line impacts in Takoma Langlely commercial area; development around the Red Line's Takoma Station and surrounding DC communities; and the College's plans for the future.

NOTE: There are as many as six vacancies in the SSCAB. Residents are encouraged to apply. Sub-areas currently underrepresented include the neighborhoods on either side of New Hampshire Ave, south of the Beltway; and on either side of Georgia Avenue north of downtown. If interested, e-mail RSC Director.

Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee (Tuesday, June 14)

The Committee met in April to tour the B&O Railroad Station in their continuing effort to meet at the different art locations throughout Silver Spring. They also discussed the spring/summer plans for each of the Committee member's venues. (These include The Fillmore, the Black Box, AFI, Downtown SS, the College, and others.) In June the Committee will host Councilmember Tom Hucker at the headquarters of Docs-in-Progress.

Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee (Thursday, June 16)

In May, the Takoma Park / Silver Spring Montgomery College Provost, Brad Stewart, presented the school's long range master plan to the Committee. In June, issues surrounding the CSX RR overpass at Georgia Avenue will be explored; the final version of the signage system (T.A.C.) proposed by the State for downtown parking will be reviewed; and, DOT will present the status of BiPPA in downtown.

The RSC Director represents the County in various other venues, including:

Silver Spring Transportation Management District:

The SSTMD is off for the summer. But, they held a very successful 'bike-to-work' day in May and continue administering the program to promote transit through the major employers in the area.

Takoma Langlely Commercial Development Area:

The TLCDA continues working with two of the four corners of the intersection of New Hampshire and University – the two corners in Montgomery County - in close collaboration with Prince George's County and the City of Takoma Park. The key issue of the moment is the pending opening (sometime in the Fall) of the bus transit station on the Prince George's County side of this intersection will redefine pedestrian flow in the area.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Advisory Committee:

After four years representing the RSCs on this County Committee, this responsibility is now being transitioned to the Mid-County RSC. Nonetheless, since Silver Spring issues remain a consistent agenda item for this Committee, we will remain in close contact with the work of the Committee.