

# SILVER SPRING REGIONAL AREA

Monthly Report    JANUARY 2018    *Reemberto Rodriguez, Director*

## [1] COMMUNITY ISSUES

### Purple Line

In collaboration with the University of Maryland's Smart Growth Center, a story map of the Purple Line station vicinity in the Regional Area has been developed. The story map serves to highlight the people and communities along the corridor; and its on-line dashboard provides an interactive tool to explore the areas.

Some of the specific issues coming before MTA's Community Advisory Teams – and the Purple Line Transit Partners – for specific station areas include: Monitoring the Arliss Street detour (SHA has installed a left arrow signal at Piney Branch); Working with merchants and small businesses on Bonifant Street to ensure deliveries are not negatively impacted (at least two meetings were held with State officials recently); exploring if there are possible alternatives to the complete shut down of the bridges at Lyttonsville Way and Spring Street in order to rebuild them (as of now, no alternatives exist); and, finalizing how the Talbot bridge is incorporated in the art component of the Lyttonsville Station.

The Purple Line Transit Partners and MTA continue to aggressively advertised the most effective way for residents to get information on the project and contact them for issues. We have been listing these resources in our eNewsletter routinely. Regardless, we expect more and more inquires as the construction becomes more visible.

### Living Under Construction

As reported last month, living under construction remains a challenge for downtown businesses, residents, and visitors. Other than the pending Purple Line construction, there is also PEPCO's work on Fenton Street scheduled to begin early Spring; the on-going WSSC work on US29; and at least three construction projects at various stage of development. We are in close contact with County agencies (DPS, DEP, and DOT's Traffic Operations and PLD), State agencies (MTA), and the utility companies to minimize disruption and ensure adjoining merchants and customers know what is going on in a timely manner. However, the level of activity makes it challenging to ensure everyone that needs to know knows; and that we don't communicate the advisories in a way that discourages people from coming downtown.

### Dockless Bikes

The Department of Transportation's pilot project introducing large number of dockless bikes in downtown Silver Spring and surrounding neighborhoods is now expanded to four vendors. The City of Takoma Park is now part of the Pilot Area. With this increase in area and increase in bikes, we expect to have to continue aggressively communicating to users the need to park the bikes in a way that they do not impede pedestrian flow or create hazards for vehicles.

### Development Projects Update

*Old Library Site:* It is expected that an announcement regarding the selected developer will come in January. At that point, the selected developer will engage the community in further dialogue regarding the project.

*Old Police Station:* The ArtSpace project is expected to finalize its financing in time for a ground-breaking in 2018. They will begin reaching out to potential artist regarding live-work opportunities in the first quarter of 2018.

*Studio Plaza:* Merchants and small businesses in the vicinity of this development that have been impacted by the construction of the future County garage will be eligible to apply for some relieve early in 2018.

*Post Office:* The Post Office is still operating out of the (now vacant) Spring Center on 16<sup>th</sup> Street. The USPO is in the process of identifying a permanent space in downtown Silver Spring.

*Other Developments:* Two breweries are committed to opening operations in downtown; two medical marijuana dispensaries recently opened. One housing development broke ground at Fenton and Thayer; another has begun leasing on Fenton and Wayne; and, three other currently under construction are expected to be completed in 2018, with at least two others breaking ground.

## **[2] ADVISORY GROUPS**

### **Citizens Advisory Board**

In December, the Board had an exceptionally good dialogue with State Senators and Delegates from District 18 and 20 as part of their annual exchange with State elected officials. Most of the dialogue focused on the Purple Line construction notices and the impact on small merchants and businesses.

In January, the Board will have their annual meeting with the Office of Management and Budget; an extended report from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Police District; and they will also have a dialogue with Councilmember Leventhal regarding homelessness in the Regional Area. They will also continue hearing from different neighborhoods in the Area – this month it is Takoma Park.

The three SSCAB Committees are scheduled to have substantive meetings in January. The Neighborhoods Committee will be hosting the Office of Community Partnership's Liaisons; the C.E.D. Committee has invited Ellie Giles to discuss workforce; and, the T.R.E.E. Committee will continue their conversation on pedestrian safety.

In December, the SSCAB Interview Committee interviewed candidates for the Board's four vacancies. It is expected that names will be submitted for the consideration of the County Executive in January and final names be presented to County Council shortly thereafter.

### **Urban District Advisory Committee**

In December, the Committee heard from the Purple Line Transit Partners, focusing on the two stations in downtown Silver Spring, the Transit Station and the Library Station. Much of the conversation focused on the need to coordinate efforts on the ground to minimize disruption.

In January, the Committee will dialogue with the South Silver Spring Neighborhood Association about their concerns regarding safety in the hotels in the area; they will discuss their presentation at the upcoming budget forum; and they will hear a presentation about the real estate developments in downtown that have recently being built, are under construction, or approved to be built.

The Urban District Operations continues with the 'Weekender Program', whereas individuals in the correctional system come to work with the Red Shirts to clean up downtown Silver Spring. This highly successful program is being considered for replication by Takoma Park.

### **Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee**

In December, the SSA&EC met to review the annual report from the Maryland Arts Council; and did a 'round table' conversation regarding what each member – and other arts organizations – are doing in downtown Silver Spring, particularly for the winter months. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February.

### **Transportation Management District**

In December, the Committee heard from Darcy Buckley, with an update on the BRT on US29, including the proposed interface with the Transit Station. The agenda for January is TBD.

### **Other Institutional Engagement**

The RSC Director represents the County in a series of other initiatives, institutions, and government sector, some of the most active includes:

- Takoma Langley Commercial Development Authority – The Executive Director, Melanie Isis, has resigned and a search is underway for a new Executive Director.
- Long Branch Business Partners – Is scheduled to meet in January or February.
- Long Branch Business League – Have plans for a January 'meet & greet', bringing neighbors and businesses together.
- Silver Spring Town Center, Inc. – Is coordinating and promoting their aggressive Winter Programming schedule.
- City of Takoma Park – Has signed MOU for the dock-less bikes pilot project.