

# SILVER SPRING REGIONAL AREA

Monthly Report    APRIL 2019    *Reemberto Rodriguez, Director*

Please review archive of reports from links at <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/silverspring/boardscommittees/cab/index.html>

## Living Under Construction

PEPCO's work continues to create serious circulation challenges on Georgia Avenue, and through downtown Silver Spring, Montgomery College TP/SS Campus, through the eastern part of Takoma Park, and on through NE DC down Eastern Avenue. In order to expedite the work, PEPCO is now working on multiple locations simultaneously, often times having to do Saturday work, and occasionally working well into rush-hour. Additionally, temporary patching and resurfacing has been problematic including unstable metal plates and extremely bumpy roads. Communication with impacted businesses and area residents has not been what was expected. Recently, a meeting with neighborhoods in the path of the Georgia Avenue work was attended only by a couple of residents as the official PEPCO notice was simply not sufficient. In downtown Silver Spring there's been incidents of access to certain business being blocked unannounced and unexpectedly. We are in communication with PEPCO officials about these challenges. There is a meeting with Fenton Village businesses planned for May 15<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, we are working with Councilmember Hucker and Mayor Stewart to do a broader meeting at the College as well. (Recently DC's Councilmember Todd held a multi-jurisdictional meeting to address this and other common issues.)

In downtown Silver Spring the issue of dealing with PEPCO's disruptions is exasperated by the various other construction projects going on in the area. Some of these include: Major WSSC work on Colesville and minor work on various other locations; the construction of Gene Lynch Park at Colesville and 2<sup>nd</sup> (by the Metro); and at least three major development projects not yet completed (Studio Plaza, HOC Apartments at Fenton and Thayer, and the Washington Project at Georgia and Bonifant.) This condition will continue for years to come as the Purple Line begins construction later this year and as many as an additional five project break ground in the months to come.

We continue intensifying our efforts to stay in touch with the various agencies and developers involved in all these disruptions as we try to manage expectations. Yet it is inevitable that the challenges of "living under construction" will be with us for the foreseeable future as downtown Silver Spring continues to thrive.

## Oakview Neighborhood Action Team

We've been working with the Oakview Neighborhood (located southwest of the intersection of the Beltway and New Hampshire Road) for months. The residents have organized to address a multitude of issues that include public safety, environmental conditions (trash and stream maintenance), parking, speeding, and more. Recently we walked the neighborhood with representatives from the Civic Association and identified particular hot spots of trash. Some of these spots are in SHA property and others in private property (New Hampshire Estate Apartment.) We will be addressing this issue together with the Department of Environmental Protection. We will also be reaching out to art organizations to potentially introduce an art element in these trouble spots to discourage dumping. (The nearby mural at New Hampshire and Piney Branch will be redone by Arts on the Block, the arts organization that originally did the mural over a decade ago.)

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Police Precinct will be attending the Civic Association meeting April 11<sup>th</sup> to share with the residents how to most effectively report suspicious activity and address other related safety issues.

## **Montgomery Hills**

The Montgomery Hills / Forest Glen Master Plan process has galvanized the community and residents to a level of engagement not seen previously in the area. Last year the neighborhoods on both sides of the Beltway came together and celebrated with local businesses in a street party. They plan to do the same this year. Additionally, under the leadership of residents, Councilmembers have walked the area to see firsthand the challenging issues regarding pedestrian safety, vehicular circulation, and business mix. The State Highway Administration reconvened their Stakeholders Group which advised their process to develop a plan for reconfiguring Georgia Avenue from 16<sup>th</sup> Street to Forest Glen. The community has also initiated a monthly gathering at local restaurants to encourage support for the businesses that currently exist in the area.

## **Progress Place**

At the initiative of nearby neighbors and the non-profits servicing clients at Progress Place, an increasingly large group of stakeholders – including the Greater Silver Spring Chamber, 3<sup>rd</sup> Police Precinct, and the Urban District – are meeting regularly to address safety concerns and related issues. These include the deteriorating condition of Progress Place itself (malfunctioning bathrooms, and more); easy access to beer, wine, and liquor; the loitering on Georgia Avenue at the Fire Station; lack of smoking space; perception of danger in the CSX underpass; and general public safety in the vicinity.

Some of the issues have been partially addressed. The underpass now has enhanced lighting; and a small fence has been installed to identify more clearly the B&O RR property. The group has defined specific requests to address some of the larger issues. However, how to fund the associated costs remains challenging.

## **Small Business in the Path of the Purple Line**

In collaboration with the County's Business Specialists, we are comprehensively addressing some of issues confronting small businesses along the Purple Line Corridor. In Silver Spring this includes the commercial hubs in Brookville, Bonifant St., Long Branch, and Takoma Langley. Each of these four areas is different and requires a different approach. Some of the support has included revamping web-sites, doing bus shelter signage, and providing limited financial support. Moving forward, we will continue working with others to collaborate on this effort in various ways. This includes the Purple Line Transit Partners, the University of Maryland's Smart Growth Center who is heading up the Purple Line Corridor Coalition, the Maryland Transit Authority, the Latino Economic Development, and area-specific groups (i.e.: the Long Branch Business League, the Takoma Langley Commercial Development Authority, and the City of Takoma Park.)

## **[2] ADVISORY GROUPS**

### **Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board**

Next meeting: Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m. - Civic Building. On the Agenda: A conversation with 10 locally serving and locally controlled non-profits; and, a presentation on dog parks. Also, committee reports on recent major meetings, including the Green Bank, and the Office of Community Partnerships.

### **Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee**

Next meeting: Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 p.m. (Silver Spring Urban District Operations, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Fire Station #1.) On the Agenda: Report on Montgomery County Trends; and, new approach to Urban District events, including the repurposing of Jazz Festival resources.

### **Silver Spring Transportation Management District**

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 8:00 a.m. (Location and agenda TBD.)

### **Other key advisory groups and initiatives relevant to Silver Spring that the RSC Director regularly monitors/attends**

- Purple Line Community Advisory Teams – Construction of the Purple Line continues at a brisk pace. It is expected that road disruptions will be more evident mid-year. Next series of meetings will likely be in late winter/early spring.
- Bus Rapid Transit Community Advisory Committees – As construction has officially begun, next meetings are being scheduled soon.
- Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee – No meeting set at this time. However, there is robust activity with the arts in Silver Spring, including a new art walk starting in April; and the unveiling of a new mural on Bonifant and Georgia.
- Silver Spring Town Center, Inc. – Getting ready for their ambiance performances on Veterans Plaza once the ice-skating rink moves out (to return in October.)
- Long Branch Partners – This group of over 25 service providers meets quarterly. Next meeting in May or June.