

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board Annual Report for FY2013

The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (SSCAB) spent fiscal year 2013 addressing long-standing community concerns, discussing new property developments, and inviting heads and employees of government agencies to discuss how their work impacts Silver Spring and Takoma Park.

SSCAB and the community engaged in a dialogue with Police Chief Tom Manger about community safety and security issues in the Silver Spring Regional Area, with particular focus on youth-related issues. Recreation Department Director Gabe Alborno and Assistant State Attorneys for Montgomery County Steve Chalkin and George Simms were also present. This discussion was a follow-up to the one-year anniversary of the youth-related shootings in Silver Spring that led to controversial and ultimately tabled curfew legislation.

Concerns with transportation and property developments increased throughout the year. The Transportation, Energy and Environment Committee (TREE), which used to be named the Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee, met with Councilmember Marc Elrich on Bus Rapid Transit and focused on its funding. The Neighborhoods Committee and the Commercial Economic Development (CED) Committee collaborated to provide a presentation by the 8001 Newell Street development team and a community discussion with Planning Board Member Casey Anderson with Staff Member Elza Hisel McCoy. Studio Plaza was another residential development in Silver Spring that was a great concern to the East Silver Spring residents. The Board submitted a letter regarding the project, which led to Studio Plaza implementing changes to its plan for development. The development of a soccer field on Northwood Four Corners Park, the Blair Redevelopment project, and the Purple Line development were also discussed during the Neighborhoods, TREE and CED committees. The latest development project in Silver Spring discussed was the re-development of City Place mall, which will be re-branded as Ellsworth Place. The Board and the community voiced our excitement and considerations of the Ellsworth Place project to the County Council and County Executive as well.

Zoning law changes remained a long-standing concern in the Silver Spring community. The Neighborhoods Committee and the Commercial Economic Development (CED) Committee partnered up again to let Jennifer Wise from Montgomery County Parks and Planning present an overview of the zoning rewrite currently in process and the specifics of the proposed zoning text amendment regarding accessory apartments. Glen Orlin from the County Council's staff shared his analysis of the zoning text amendment and an update on the discussion and proposals that emerged from the County Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) committee.

Given the recent property developments, SSCAB responded to a growing call for more open space, green space and urban parks in the community. TREE held a joint meeting with Neighborhoods Committee to learn from a presentation on green space and urban parks. Montgomery County's Silver Spring Central Business District planner Robert Kronenburg summarized the history and current state of the County's vision through its master plan for the Central Business District to educate the community on the state of open space and property developments in Silver Spring. The Board wrote to the County Council and County Executive a summary of residential concerns regarding open space while offering possible remedies.

Despite the growing attention to the recent property developments in Silver Spring, the Board and its committees focused on other areas of need. The needs of small businesses remained a priority for the CED committee, evidenced by inviting Jerry Godwin of the Wheaton Business Innovation Center and Ernest Bland of the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee to speak about small businesses. CED also continued the work of organizing the 3rd annual Taste the World in Fenton Village to support the local restaurants and neighboring businesses distant from the more developed downtown Silver

Spring. Meanwhile, TREE dealt with environmental matters such as the Tree Canopy Conservation bill. The Board relayed community feedback and recommendations on the bill to the County Council and County Executive in the form of a letter. As the FY14 budget process was underway, the Board wrote to the County Council and County Executive to advise them on the budget priorities of Silver Spring and Takoma Park residents, including funding for the Taste the World at Fenton Village, increased funding for affordable housing initiatives and positive youth development, and continuation of police presence in downtown Silver Spring, the Civic Building Pilot Program, and transportation funding.

SSCAB also invited directors and employees of the County whose work impact the daily lives and activities in Silver Spring:

- David Dise, Director of the County's Department of General Services, provided updates on the development of the new Silver Spring Library, Progress Place, Third District Police Station, Transit Center. Dise also engaged in a discussion on re-use of the existing library site in Silver Spring and existing 3rd district police station building.
- Ramona Bell Pearson, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer for the County and Jewru Bandeh, then-Manager for the Silver Spring Civic Building and Veterans Plaza. Both Pearson and Bandeh spoke on the \$200,000 Pilot Program to Increase Access to the Civic Building Facility and its implementation during the year.
- Uma Ahluwalia, Director of Health and Human Services Director for Montgomery County, also spoke on the presence of health and human services in the Silver Spring Regional Area.
- Rick Nelson, Director for Montgomery County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs was invited to speak on affordable housing and other residential development in the County.
- Steve Silverman, Director of Economic Development, came to give SSCAB and the community an update on the department's initiatives in the County.
- Rohan Ross, Solid Waste & Recycling Supervisor for the City of Takoma Park and Eileen Kao, the Chief of the Recycling Section for the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, discussed with the TREE committee the profitable recycling programs and how it impacts our community. In addition, Yvette Freeman from the Silver Spring Urban District provided information about the recycling efforts in downtown Silver Spring.

The Board also joined with Councilmember Valerie Ervin twice to engage in community dialogues. SSCAB attended a joint community dialogue session hosted by Montgomery County Councilmember Ervin and Washington, DC Councilmember Muriel Bowser. The event was held at Shepherd Park Elementary School in the District, and was well attended by members of both the Silver Spring and D.C. communities. Agenda items included cross-jurisdictional issues such as crime, the 16th street traffic circle, parking and development. SSCAB and Councilmember Ervin also invited the community to discuss food, nutrition & hunger in Montgomery County. We discussed food insecurity, access to nutritious foods, the SNAP the Silence Challenge, school breakfast funding, Kennedy Cluster project, the County's Food Recovery Work Group, and many other important initiatives.

Overall, SSCAB addressed a myriad of issues that reflects our diversity in Silver Spring and Takoma Park. SSCAB will continue to address the concerns of those that live or work in the communities we serve.

