

Special Committee on the Bethesda Downtown Plan

Wednesday, June 29, 2016
7:30 pm, Town Hall

Attendees: Cecily Baskir, Scott Fosler, Deborah Vollmer, Dedun Ingram, Tina Coplan, Karen Elkins, Jean Shorett, Chris Files, John Freedman, Pat Burda, Quynh Tran, Michael Gravitz

Key Upcoming Dates:

July 4: Task Force Bullet Points Due for Draft Letter to Town Council
July 6: BDP Committee Meeting Town Hall, 7 pm
July 12: CBAR Community Info Mtg with Planning Staff-7:30-9 pm, BCC Regional Services Center 4805 Edgemoor
July 13: Town Council Meeting - **Council to consider our bullet points for the PB.**
July 21: Planning Board to vote on Bethesda Downtown Plan (**BDP**)
Sept: Montgomery County Council to hold public hearings on the Plan
?: Council to vote on the Bethesda Downtown Plan

Planning Board Updates: It was proposed, and the Committee agreed, that the Committee will prepare a draft letter with bullet points to send to the Planning Board before its July 21 vote on the Plan, to be included in the record before the Plan goes to the County Council. Task forces will draft bullet points, and the Committee will discuss and approve a draft on July 6 to go to the Town Council for consideration at its July 13 meeting.

General Comments on the Planning Board and Master Plan: Scott shared with the Committee his understanding of the planning philosophy of the Planning Board and how it has changed over the years. The Committee observed that since the Master Plan is now a legally binding document, it has become more vague and general, depending on vehicles like the Design Guidelines Booklet for specific parameters. In general, there is great concern among Committee members about what, if any, enforcement will be behind various requirements for good design, respecting the borders of residential communities, residential zoning etc. The Committee discussed communications with the Planning Staff to learn more about the Design Guidelines Booklet, as well as some of the metrics used in developing the Plan.

Communications: Chris (Files) pointed out that we need clear and consistent messages for residents, which break down the jargon- esp. important for a flyer to residents regarding upcoming community meeting with the Planning Board July 12, in Bethesda near B metro.

Drop Box: Todd Hoffman has created a BDP Committee dropbox folder for us, and he will be in touch via email with a link and instructions- this is for document sharing.

Tudor Buildings on Wisconsin Avenue: Deborah (Vollmer) has been actively pushing for the preservation of the Tudor Buildings but it not entirely clear if the owners of these buildings are committed to an historic designation of their properties (quite restrictive in terms of any further development or even renovation).

Jaffe Tower Task Force Update: Cecily reported that Roger Berliner met with Ridge St. residents on June 29 to look at the area by the proposed Jaffe development. A survey of West Avenue residents indicates almost unanimous support for a 60-90 foot maximum building height but no clear consensus on issues such as tradeoffs between height and setback. As we move

forward, key selling points for a reduced height from 145 feet are the R-60 designation of the back lots and the issue of edge compatibility within a residential neighborhood.

General Impact Density Task Force: The PB's approved 32.4 million sq. feet of density for Bethesda needs to be evaluated through seven metrics—

Traffic
Schools
Other infrastructure
Growth
Actual Occupancy
Compliance
Parks

The task force is making progress in assessing these metrics.

Parking Lots Task Force: Pat (Burda) informed us that Bernstein wants to develop Parking Lot 24. Committee needs to research developer plans and organize meetings with Bernstein, Starr and the Parking Authority (**PA**). The PA needs money, so it is going to be interested in development of the lots.

Next meeting: Weds. July 6, 7-9 p.m. [**CBAR Community Meeting July 12, 7:30-9**]