



Barney Rush, *Mayor*
Cecily Baskir, *Vice Mayor*
Wicca Davidson, *Secretary*
Kirk Renaud, *Treasurer*
Joel Rubin, *Intergovernmental
and Public Liaison*

October 11, 2019

Mr. Casey Anderson, Chair
and Members of the County Planning Board
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chairman Anderson, Vice Chair Fani-Gonzalez, and Commissioners Cichy, Patterson and Verma:

The Bernstein Management Company and EYA came to our Town Hall on Oct. 3, 2019 to present their revised plans for the redevelopment of the Farm Women's Market and the adjacent surface parking lots. This event allowed many of our residents register their views about these revised plans. Overall, our Town Council has received a strong positive response, and we are pleased to support the revised plans.

The developers have worked hard over the past year to take into account community concerns, as well as those raised by the County Executive and the Historical Preservation Commission. We applaud their efforts and are pleased with the results. The new building on Lot 24 will now be narrower, and there will be an extension off the backside of the market building instead of a stand-alone pavilion set deep into the current parking lot space. These changes materially increase the size of the park area on Lot 24. The green space is further enhanced by conversion of Lot 10 to park space with attractive amenities, rather than town homes.

Overall, Bethesda will now benefit from the realization of the vision set out in the 2017 Bethesda Downtown Plan: a multi acre park, stretching from Elm St. in the north to Walsh St. in the south, serving the needs of a rapidly growing urban area. There is no doubt that future generations of residents will appreciate this entire green space – vital for recreation, relaxation and enhancing our sense of community.

In addition, we endorse the refurbishment of the Farm Women's Market. Establishing a vibrant and successful food market comprised of many small vendors and eateries is not an easy endeavor, and it matters to all of us that this be successful. The new market extension will also encourage outdoor dining facing the park – helping to activate it and providing enhanced security.

Parking has also been a major concern to our residents. We are therefore pleased that the public underground garage on Lot 24 will have 300 spaces, resulting in no net loss of public parking, and that there will be entrances and exits on both Willow Lane and Leland Street. This will promote ease of access and reduce congestion.

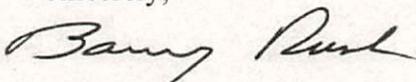
If the sketch plan is approved, we realize that a great deal of work will be required to advance the project to the Site Plan presentation. During that time, many issues will need to be resolved, including the following:

- The status of Lot 10 redevelopment. We understand that this is considered “Phase 2,” to be undertaken after completion of the project involving Lot 24. We understand that, as a matter of timing, it makes sense for the development of the Lot 10 park to be sequenced after the new underground garage is in operation, so that the 100 spaces in Lot 10 remain available to the public during the garage construction. This will minimize the impact on local businesses. We strongly believe, however, that creating a park on Lot 10 is a vital part of the entire project, and we request that its design and amenities be planned in conjunction with the design work for the Lot 24 park and any refurbishment or redesign of Elm St. Park. Funding for development and refurbishment of all three parks should also be undertaken holistically. In sum, “Phase 2” should mean “immediately upon completion of Phase 1.” It must not mean “maybe.”
- Community engagement in park planning. The developers have presented sketches showing an array of attractive amenities, and we appreciate many of these ideas. We believe it is also important to engage the community in the park planning process and therefore call on the Parks Department to undertake what we believe was previously agreed: a planning process that includes charrettes to ensure appropriate community input to the design of a green space that will be used by residents in the surrounding buildings and neighborhoods. As part of this process, we ask that the engineering of the garage take into account the planting of canopy trees in appropriate spots around the park.
- Attention to construction period safety and disruption: This will be a large and complex project, stretching over 2½ to 3 years. Many residences are in the immediate vicinity of the future construction site, and many Town residents walk, bike, or drive along Leland Street and Willow Lane every day. In addition, many members of the community regularly use Lots 10 and 24. Special care needs to be paid to ensure safety, minimize disruption, and maintain all of Lot 10 for public use during Phase 1.

We look forward to continued engagement with the developers, the County, the Planning Department, and the Parks Department as these issues are discussed and resolved.

In sum, we are excited by the current plans for the Farm Women’s Market redevelopment and park creation. If executed well, this project will add to the quality of life in Bethesda and surrounding communities. We therefore support adoption of the sketch plan. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Barney Rush
Mayor, Town of Chevy Chase