

MEMORANDUM

March 23, 2022

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Pamela Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst
Carlos Camacho, former Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

PURPOSE: Worksession to develop recommendations for Council consideration

Expected Participants:

Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Gwen Wright, Director, Montgomery Planning Department
Elza Hisel-McCoy, Down County Chief, Planning Department
Larissa Klevan, Master Plan Supervisor, Planning Department
Atara Margolies, Planner Coordinator, Planning Department
Cristina Sasaki, Parks Planner Coordinator, Parks Department

This is the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee's fourth worksession on the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan. The prior worksessions covered the introduction to the Plan, the eight districts that make up the Plan area, and the Plan-wide recommendations on housing. This worksession will cover the Plan-wide recommendations for parks, trails, and public spaces, as well as transportation and school infrastructure. The Executive's Fiscal Impact Statement on the Plan will also be discussed. A worksession scheduled for April 1 will cover the Plan-wide recommendations for land use and zoning, economic growth, and urban design. The last scheduled worksession will address any remaining Plan-wide recommendations, elements of Plan implementation, and any follow-up items requested by the Committee.

This staff report covers the Plan recommendations for parks and open spaces. A separate staff report by Dr. Glenn Orlin will cover transportation and school infrastructure recommendations as well as the Fiscal Impact Statement. Testimony related to this staff report is attached on © 1-7.

Councilmembers may wish to bring their copy of the Plan to the meeting.
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A link to the Planning Board Draft for those wishing to access the Plan online is here:

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SSDAC-Planning-Board-Draft-FINAL-FOR-WEB-reduced2.pdf>

As noted in prior staff reports, Silver Spring is renowned for its uniqueness and diversity, as well as for its abundance of locally owned and ethnically diverse small businesses. The revitalization of Silver Spring was spurred by the 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan and related initiatives by the public and private sector. The resulting development of the downtown area, including the Civic Building, Veteran’s Plaza, and Ellsworth Place, has been tremendously successful and has brought people from all over the region to work, live, play, and enjoy Silver Spring.

The Plan envisions a Silver Spring of the future as a great place to work, do business, and enjoy the arts. Home to small independent businesses, cutting-edge science, research and tech companies, educational institutions, and arts organizations. A place that remains unique, affordable, and attractive to people of all ages and backgrounds with new open spaces that are better connected and characterized by green, climate-resilient, and safe walkable streets.

PLAN-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parks, Trails, and Public Spaces

The plan continues to support many of the goals found in the 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan, while also emphasizing the County’s commitment to mitigating climate change, creating complete communities, and advancing racial equity and social justice.

The recommendations included in the parks, trails, and open spaces section, as well as the resilient downtown section, strive to address many of the issues highlighted by the community including improving pedestrian and bike infrastructure, improving, and creating more parks and playgrounds, and adding more trees within the commercial core.

Combining these two aspects, the plan envisions a Silver Spring with “new open spaces [to] promote a healthier community for all who spend time in the downtown... [that is] better connected and characterized by green, climate-resilient, walkable streets that are safe and comfortable for everyone – pedestrians, bikers, transit riders, and drivers.”

The goals of the plan, as related to parks, trails and open spaces, support the plan’s four overarching themes of 1) diversity, 2) connectivity, 3) resiliency, and 4) community health. They were developed in alignment with policy guidance from numerous previous and ongoing plans¹ such as the 2010 Silver Spring CBD Green Space Guidelines, the 2017 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan, and the 2018 Energized Public Spaces (EPS) Functional Master Plan.

Goals:

- Encourage physical activity by providing safe and convenient access to an interconnected, multi-functional, and comfortable network of parks, public spaces, and trails connecting people to jobs, centers of activity, and nature.

¹ The Plan also cites the Thrive 2050 Plan and 2022 PROS Plan; however, as these are not yet adopted by the Council they should be removed or referenced by footnote as additional unadopted resources.

- Facilitate social interaction by developing parks that offer easy opportunities for daily impromptu interactions with neighbors and organized social gatherings.
- Steward the environment within the urban context by creatively integrating sustainable strategies to adapt to and mitigate climate change and maintaining our commitment to environmental stewardship.
- Promote economic prosperity by creating fun and appealing park facilities and programming that energizes Silver Spring, while celebrating its rich history and vibrant culture.

Recommendations:

Equity

A fifth overarching theme that is used to guide the plan's recommendations is equity. The recommendations strive to promote a fair distribution of parks and public spaces that contribute to improving community health and are accessible to all. To increase equity in the plan area the plan recommends:

- Add additional park facilities and programs that promote physical activity, including in small spaces.
- Ensure a fair distribution of the park experiences across the various districts. Parks should be located near transit, accessible by walking and biking, and surrounded by active building frontages.
- Facilitate the creation of new and the renovation of existing parks and public spaces that accommodate multiple needs, including recreation, education, community-building, and environment stewardship within the urban context.
- Promote facilities that celebrate cultural and historic aspects of the community, serve the distinct social connection needs of seniors, teenagers, young adults, and people with disabilities, and contribute to the sense of pride and ownership of parks.
- Expand the urban tree canopy coverage and pervious surfaces in parks and public spaces, both publicly and privately owned. Promote watershed connectivity through education and best stormwater management practices.
- Engage stakeholders such as property owners, developers, non-profit groups, community members, artists, and public agencies to collaborate in delivering creative solutions and development strategies. Work with the community and schools to develop early advocacy programs and activities to encourage nature appreciation, education, and stewardship.

Council Staff supports the recommendations to further equity in Parks and Public Spaces throughout the Plan.

Green Loop Connectivity

- Implement the proposed Green Loop to connect existing and proposed parks and public spaces with other land uses inside the Plan and the surrounding region promoting walking and biking to these places with comfortable, sustainable, safe, and shaded roads, sidewalks, and trails.
- Ensure access to all parks and public spaces – including POPS – that are designed to support casual, impromptu use, and connection with nature and other land uses.
- Improve signage and wayfinding of parks, public spaces, and trails; consider partnering with future commercial/businesses organizations to create a public space map and signage for the Green Loop and the open space network in Silver Spring.

- Promote physical activity, people watching, social connections and integration of amenities and parks and public spaces with internal walking loops inside public spaces and through connections to the Green Loop, respectively.

The Plan contains an entire section on *Connecting the Districts* which includes subsections on *The Green Loop* and *Connecting Across the Rail*. Council Staff supports, in theory, the recommendations related to the Green Loop; however, details regarding the creation of the Green Loop will be reviewed with the broader transportation recommendations as several elements of the Green Loop depend on transportation infrastructure.

Creative Implementation

- Consider short-term/temporary solutions and “pop-up” programming that reflect community identity within temporary/interim parks. Consider empty lots, surface parking areas or other opportunity sites adjacent to the Green Loop as potential pilot sites.

Council Staff supports the recommendation for creative implementation of temporary parks spaces and “pop-ups”. The Committee should note that in the section listing all recommended parks and public spaces, several are POPS (not on property owned by M-NCPPC).

Equity in Park and Public Spaces Implementation

Silver Spring was identified as an implementation priority area through the mapping of Experience Improvement Areas (EIAs) of the Energized Public Spaces (EPS) Plan with an overlay of the Department’s Equity Focus Areas (EFAs).

Goal:

Address the distribution of park resources in the County’s urbanizing areas. Give a voice to underserved communities and contribute to the efforts initiated by the County Council on racial equity and social justice.

Recommendations:

- Promote a fair distribution of attractive, safe, and fun parks and public spaces as common civic spaces with facilities and programming open to all ages, race, culture, income, and abilities.
- Prioritize and identify opportunity sites and test scenarios to measure the impact of additional development on park facilities to better address distribution of parks resources.
- Utilize EFAs and EIAs as tools to prioritize funding and implementation for parks and public spaces projects.

Council Staff supports the recommendations for equitable implementation of parks and public spaces².

Proposed Park Locations and Recommendations

The 2017 and 2022 PROS Plans and the 2018 EPS Plan state that each area master plan should recommend an interconnected system of parks that achieve multiple objectives. The size and functions

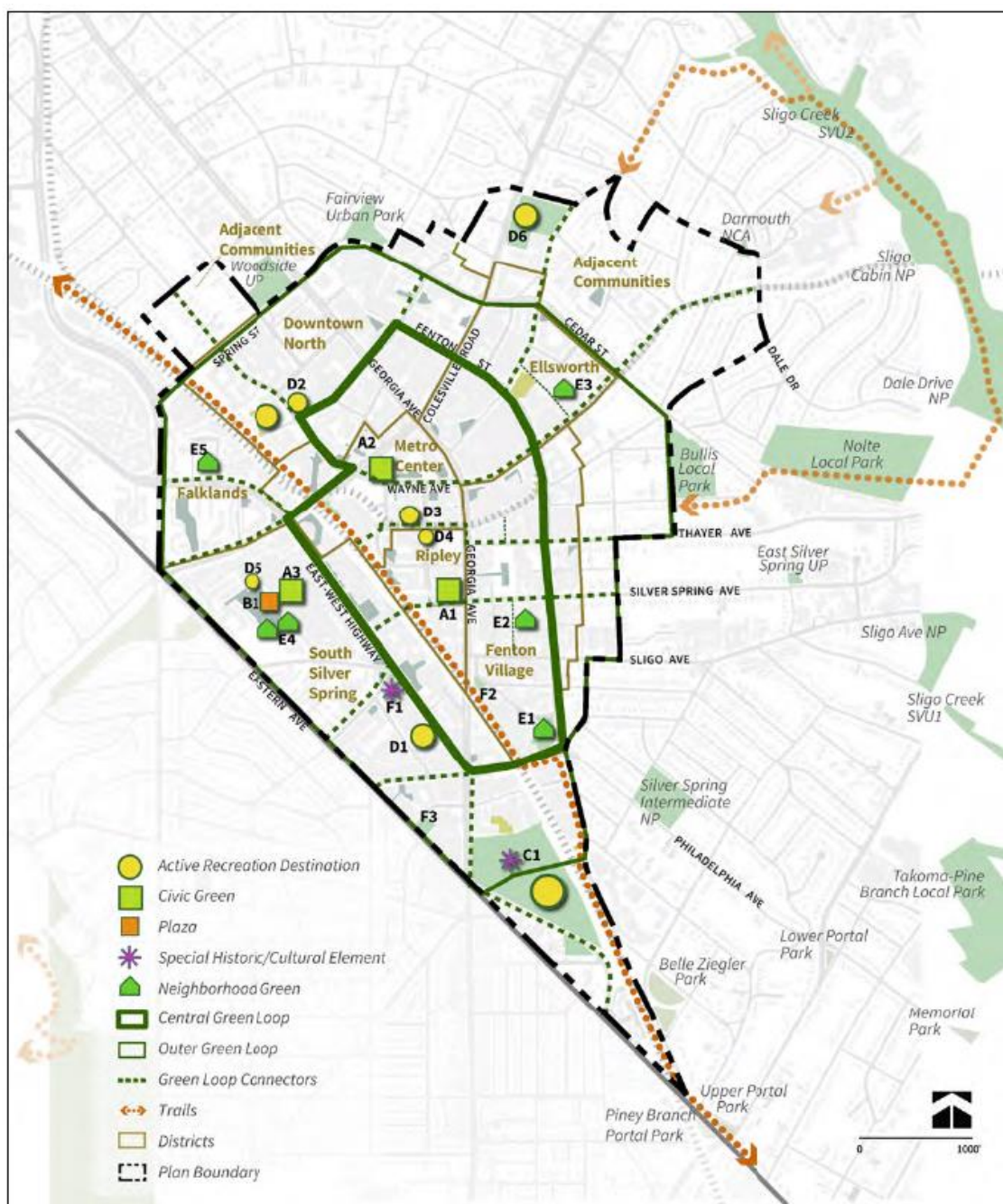
² However, this section more be better located following the section on Equity (pgs 96-97 in the Plan).

of the park and its facilities should be directly proportional to the projected density and land use patterns of the community.

Map 21 (below) illustrates the proposed location of parks and public spaces creating an interconnected network through the Green Loop system. The designation of Civic Green, Plaza, Neighborhood Green, etc., is done to highlight the major function emphasis of a park or public space, not to limit other experiences. All parks should provide social, active, and nature-based experiences to the extent possible across the various districts of this Plan.

Recommendations:

- For the Plan area, park locations should seek opportunities to provide active, contemplative, and social gathering experiences, in central civic spaces interconnected to the proposed Green Loop
- For each District, parks and public spaces should seek to provide recreational amenities that can be accessed by walking or biking (also supported by the Green Loop connections).



Map 21. Proposed Park Locations Approach Diagram

Proposed Parks³:

Civic Green - Parks and Public spaces that emphasize social gathering.

- Create: Ripley District Civic Green
Location: Ripley District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.5 acre minimum; 1.5 acres ideal

³ The current naming of proposed parks and public spaces is subject to change and will be defined during the implementation phase of each project.

- Create: Gene Lynch Civic Green (currently under construction)
Location: Metro Center District
Ownership: MCDOT/M-NCPPC
Size: 0.25 acre
- Create: Blair Park/The Terrace (currently approved under the Blairs Master Plan)
Location: South Silver Spring
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.95 acre

Plaza - These spaces align with and complement the Civic Green urban parks subcategory. These spaces also emphasize social gathering.

- Create: Sonny's Park (currently approved under the Blairs Master Plan)
Location: South Silver Spring District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.4 acre

Countywide Urban Recreational Park - Oriented to the recreational needs of surrounding neighborhoods and districts, this type of park provides space for many activities.

- Renovate: Jesup Blair Park
Location: South Silver Spring District
Ownership: M-NCPPC
Size: 14.2 acres

At 14.2 acres, Jesup Blair Local Park is the largest park within the Plan area and is designated in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Community members have stated that this park is underutilized and that it needs facilities, landscape improvements and additional recreational experiences. Access to the park presents additional challenges, as it is located away from downtown Silver Spring and is separated by physical barriers, including railroad tracks, fences, and both Georgia Avenue and Blair Road.

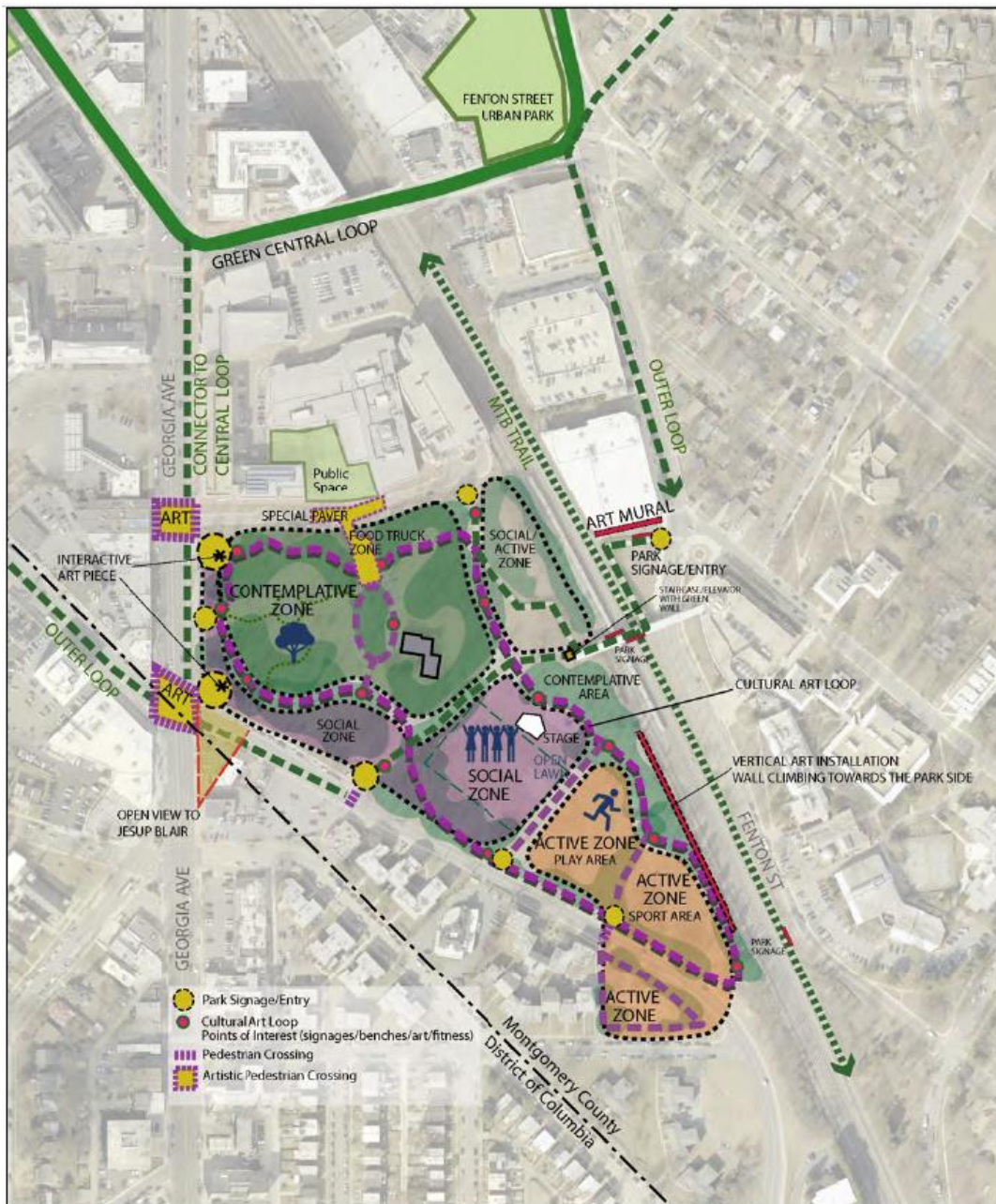


Figure 43. Illustrative Concept for Jesup Blair Urban Recreational Park

The Parks Department is currently developing a concept plan for Jesup Blair Park, concurrent with this Plan so that its analysis and design work capitalize on the feedback and outreach efforts underway.

Preliminary Concept Plan Recommendations:

- Improve physical and visual access to the park by:
 - Implementing the Green Loop
 - Expanding connectivity/visibility of the park along Georgia Avenue
 - Improving wayfinding with signage and public art along Fenton Street
 - Improving pedestrian network with improvements and traffic calming along Blair Road
 - Enhancing the pedestrian crossings along Georgia Avenue with art treatments

- Considering the removal or reduction of perimeter fencing and
- Considering the potential to locate a public transit stop near the park.
- Promote social connection, diversity, community health, identity, and sense of ownership by:
 - Promoting strong programming for the park
 - Encouraging multi-use spaces such as lawns, play areas, and courts instead of specialized uses
 - Creating a variety of experience zones within the park, emphasizing active, social, and contemplative areas, making the park a destination place with many things to do for different age groups, interests, and abilities
 - Introducing opportunities for public art that celebrate cultural aspects of the community
 - Creating a signature internal active, recreational, and cultural art trail loop
 - Considering the use of a diverse palette of plant and tree species that provide different colors, form, and textures throughout all the seasons
 - Engaging the community to activate the park and
 - Considering options to extend park hours.

Testimony: The Council received testimony primarily focused on the Jesup Blair House and its potential future uses; however, where this testimony commented on the broader Jesup Park it recommended retaining much of the park as it currently is, concerned that over activation and development of the park would limit its appeal as an open area for a variety of unprogrammed, impromptu activities.

Community Use Urban Recreational Park - These parks serve the immediate neighborhood. Physical activity is the main emphasis of this park, but social and contemplative opportunities should also be considered.

- Create: South Silver Spring Park
Location: South Silver Spring District
Ownership: M-NCPPC
Size: 1.62 acres
- Create: Downtown North Park
Location: Downtown North District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.5 acre minimum
- Create: Metro Center Park
Location: Metro Center District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.5 acre minimum
- Create: Bonifant Park
Location: Metro Center District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.10 acre minimum
- Create: Fitness Park (currently approved in the Blairs Master Plan)
Location: South Silver Spring
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.22 acre
- Renovate/Repurpose: Ellsworth Park
Location: Adjacent Communities
Ownership: M-NCPPC
Size: 3.6 acres

Neighborhood Green - This park is very flexible and supports social connections, physical activities, and access to nature.

- Renovate/Expand: Fenton Street Park
Location: Fenton Village District
Ownership: M-NCPPC
Size: 1.75 acres
- Create: Fenton Village Park
Location: Fenton Village District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.5 minimum
- Create: Ellsworth District Park
Location: Ellsworth District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.5 acre minimum
- Create: Rachel Carson, Blair Stomping, The Mews, and Lucy's Landing (currently approved in the Blairs Master Plan)
Location: South Silver Spring District
Likely Ownership: POPS
Size: 1 acre (all 4 parcels combined)
- Create: Falkland Park (and Connect: Falkland Stream Restoration to north parcel)
Location: Falklands District
Ownership: POPS
Size: 0.5 minimum (consolidated space)

Pocket Green - This smaller park will allow for “pauses” with a landscaped setting along the streets between larger parks within the parks and public spaces network.

- Renovate: Acorn Park
Location: South Silver Spring District
Ownership: M-NCPPC
Size: (missing in Plan)
- Develop: Philadelphia Park
Location: Fenton Village District
Ownership: M-NCPPC
Size: 0.18 acre
- Retain: King Street Park
Location: South Silver Spring District
Ownership: POPS, leased to M-NCPPC
Size: 0.38 acre

Council Staff comment: During the discussion of the community gardens as part of the review of the South Silver Spring District, the Committee noted their support to retain open space in this area (as currently provided as community gardens); however, the Committee noted that it does not necessarily need to be maintained as community gardens. This section of the Plan highlights that the King Street gardens are privately owned and leased annually to the Parks Department. The recommendation in the Plan is to “Retain existing community gardens at the western end of the parcel on the 7980 Georgia Avenue site as part of any redevelopment opportunity. Connect community garden to proposed through-block connection.” The Committee may want to revisit this recommendation in light of the clarification

on ownership. If proposed to remain as public open space, this would be approximately 25% of the land area of this property.

Temporary/Interim Parks - A temporary park is a type of park created for a certain period of time in a location that is not currently planned as future public space. An interim park is a type of park created to bridge the time gap between design, funding, and construction of a permanent public space and can accommodate temporary uses until resources for permanent uses become available.

The plan specifies recommended actions for 19 parks and public spaces in the Plan area. The recommendations include the creation of 13 parks, as well as the renovation, expansion, or repurposing of 4 parks. The recommendations also include the development of Philadelphia Pocket Green Park in Fenton Village and the retention of a community garden in King Street Park in South Silver Spring. Planning staff indicates that the parks and open space recommendations will mainly use CIP funding for implementation.

In addition, the Plan includes a recommendation for on-site public open spaces. This recommendation states that applicants for Optional Method development projects required to provide public open space on a site not recommended for a new public space in the Plan area be encouraged to contribute to the creation of new and/or improvement of existing public parks recommended by this Plan, preferably within the same district. This recommendation is intended to channel resources to create new and improve existing public parks instead of creating on-site public open spaces that are too small, fail to enhance the public realm and prevent buildings from activating the street.

Council staff supports the Park recommendations offered in the Plan.

Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan

Testimony by George French, 2/17/22

I crafted and submitted testimony concerning this initiative to the Planning Board, 12/2/2021. I was put in one of the matrix summary boxes for comments that were completely, 100% opposite of my testimony in this regard. I stated NOT to renovate and construct more park “amenities” in Jesup Blair Park, but rather restore the Jesup Blair House and lease it to a group to further activate the Park which some people consider “underutilized.” There is an organization ready and able to activate and lease the Historic Mansion/House. That is Carpe Diem Arts run by the multitalented award winning founder and executive director, Busy Graham. They have had meetings with state and local government officials, the Parks Dept, architects, interested arts organizations and concerned individuals who would be willing to lease and program the House.

The Park is a Gem! Except for minor maintenance, let it be! Some may have the wrong impression about the recreation facilities available. There are lighted basketball courts that get no mention in the study, which gives the wrong impression of the perceived need for basketball courts. Parks sports a full size regulation soccer field which has myriad uses, jogging paths, amphitheater, and 2 tennis courts.

From the plan, staff seems as if they would turn the Historic Park into a circus park, or a carnival park or an amusement park. I am totally opposed to that concept. Please leave the Park alone. The Park is a Gem! It has 330 trees in its 15 acres; 20 of which are ancient oaks. The Park would make a wonderful Arboretum No dog park please with its attendant problems. In the Parks public dog park survey several parks were favored ahead of Jesup Blair Park; with patrons begging to receive a dog park. I believe the more requested parks were North Four Corners Park, Nolte, and one other.

Please request and read the comments that were left on the Montgomery Planning MReactMap website, requested by Parks and Planning offering comments on what is liked, not liked, and needs fixing about Jesup Blair Park. There are many good recommendations not collated or otherwise presented from this interactive site. Again, the BEST way to activate the Park further is to restore the Mansion and its Annex and lease to arts groups led by Carpe Diem Arts!

I am opposed to the Parks dept proposal to spend \$8 million to construct a one acre interim park at 1110 East West Hwy. A fraction of that amount could be used to restore the Jesup Blair House. Then the Plan is to spend millions more in the future, to expand this interim park by a half acre more and make it permanent. This is only 4 blocks from the Jesup Blair House and 3 blocks from Jesup Blair Park, a Park falsely perceived by many officials as “underutilized.” This begs the question of why have competing parks if you believe the established park is sparsely used. Please fix up the Mansion first before constructing the interim park. Restore the Mansion first, and then revisit the proposed new park later.

To safely access the Park and see that it has more users, set up more cross walks or enhanced cross walks on Ga. Av. and Blair Rd. for South Silver Spring patrons of the Park. The other answer is to fix up the mansion and lease to Carpe Diem Arts.

Here is the cost of the proposed Urban Park at 1110 East West Highway: \$7, 500,000 to acquire the 1 acre piece of land (from the Parks land acquisition fund) for the property. Then \$500,000 to demolish and land fill the NTB building, a useful business and the former Coca cola bottling plant, and set up an Interim park. Then spend around \$3,000,000 to \$4,000,000 (this is unspecified) for the half acre adjacent church property to expand the interim park to 1.5 acres. Other yearly costs associated with this endeavor: \$2,500 OBI (Operating Budget Impacts), initially for Interim park, expanding to \$5,000/yr for the completed park. Figures are from MOCO announcement.

George French, Takoma Park, MD

**SSDT/AC Testimony by Marcie Stickle, Silver Spring Historical Society, Advocacy Chair
County Council, Th., 2/17/2022**

Restoration of our historic Jesup Blair House [The 1850 Moorings], must swiftly be brought to fruition, and immediately re-entered into the CIP process! Our historic 15-acre Green Oasis of a Park is already active:

The CIP process noted on the Parks chart for J.B. Park needs immediately to be switched to the House Restoration as its top priority, or a co-equal House Restoration CIP Category be immediately created! In fact, SSDT/AC **P. 80** specifically refers to The Moorings: "Inside the contemplative zone consider going beyond the traditional passive uses by introducing active programs such as yoga, tai-chi, **and other activities that can benefit of [from] the natural settings of this zone including its beautiful restored historic building.**"

SSHS is poised to testify as always we have as requested by Parks Dept. in the previously active CIP process!

The Pandemic, as elsewhere in Parks, temporarily brought our House Restoration to a severe pause, a standstill, now is the time immediately to get back on track! Our House calls out now for re-activation! Our treasure, now a tight & dry shell, eagerly anticipates Restoration completion and vibrant use:
An Artful, Diverse, Multi-Cultural, Inter-Generational, Socially Just, Joyful Destination!

SSHS enthusiastically endorses the stewardship of Carpe Diem Arts, Busy Graham, Founder & Executive Director, and her superb Board, and Team, as the lead tenant, guiding light, and organizing principle enlivening the Mansion's design, activities and mission visions.

Jesup Blair House will again become Jesup Blair COMMUNITY House as it was referred to between 1934 & 1957 when it served as the S.S. Library! With Carpe Diem Arts' superb visionary Leadership, embracing, engaging all of the vibrant Arts & Humanities groups' creativities & abilities, J.B. House & its Green Oasis of Land will be a "Hub," a pro-active magnet drawing us all in to express, enjoy, share our pro-active creativity with each other & others! Carpe Diem's visionary Busy Graham, Board, Team, & Advisory Council are experienced, pro-active, nurturing leaders in their fields. <https://www.carpediemarts.org> <https://JesupBlairHouse.org>

Arts Advocate Busy Graham was bestowed the Mo Co Executive's Lifetime Impact Award 2013:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeXOE7oN4gM>

"Graham echoed the celebratory sentiments of the evening while accepting her award for Lifetime Impact. 'Time and time again,' she stated, 'the arts and humanities have proven to be the most accessible and affordable way to celebrate what is right in the world and to give people of all ages the means to imagine and then create a better world for themselves. I believe we can rest assured that the arts and humanities will continue to thrive in Montgomery County.' "

"Arts Angel" Busy Graham receiving 2017 **Sue Hess Maryland Arts Advocate of the Year Award:**

<https://www.culturespotmc.com/stories/getting-to-know-you/arts-angel/>

<https://carpediemarts.org/blogs/busy-s-blog/posts/busy-graham-receives-2017-sue-hess-maryland-arts-advocate-of-the-year-award>

SSHS will serve as the historic roots of the House & the Park, sharing The Moorings and Downtown Silver Spring's sweeping history!

Jesup Blair House & Park, "The Moorings," "The Anchor," is "The Peoples' Park," the Community's. All will be served through visiting the SSHS Archives, sharing in a variety of historical events we will hold in the Park & in

the House, e.g., Tours of the Trees, Re-enactments, "meet Lincoln's Postmaster General Montgomery Blair," who also represented the free formerly enslaved Dred Scott before the Supreme Court 1857; FREED, Female Re-enactors of Distinction, presentations, book signings, musical performances, celebrations!

SSHS has been promoting, extolling the virtues of the historic J.B. House & Park, "The Moorings," since the 1990s, significant at national, state, county, local levels, on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, National Register-eligible, a "public park in perpetuity," an Underground R.R. site, pre-Civil War, Civil War site, last remaining House & its surrounding Land, green oasis of 15 acres, of S.S.'s founding Blair family.

Around 2009, Parks Dept. asked us to join them in the House renovation, rehabilitation, restoration. Our vision as a partner is that the lowest level will house SSHS Archives & artifacts, once the House is restored. Upon request by Parks Cultural Division, SSHS annually testified before the County Council to assure that CIP Funding was to be provided for the historic House and other historical structures in the Parks System.

We project at least 1 Weekend Day a Month to hold an Open House for the Community. We are a completely Volunteer 501(c)3. We will also hold appointments for researchers & community members to enjoy & "imbibe" our Archives stories.

Our seeing the need for Park Grove interpretation and protection, we were honored to be asked to assist Parks in the creation of 3 "History in the Parks" Heritage Signs along the Park's walking path!

Celebrating Earth Day at The Moorings in its idyllic setting is a joy! Violet Blair Janin who bequeathed our "public park in perpetuity," wrote an eloquent Poem praising her beloved Oak Trees!

"I think of the joyous e'enings, Under our old oak trees, With the moonlight shadows moving, When Stirred by the gentle breeze."

SSHS is very excited and honored to be joining with Carpe Diem Arts & other vital Partners in the Restoration, Revitalization, Re-Activation of our Jesup Blair Community House!!

J.B. Park Discussion:

Retain Regulation Soccer Field, including retaining its moveable goal posts: Diverse, Multi-Cultural Adult Teams & Children's Teams play regularly on the Field, with their family & friends cheering them on from Park picnic tables & stone wall. Happening right now while I'm composing this Testimony! Sun. 11/28/21! When not in use for Soccer matches, Soccer practice, folks fly kites on windy days, throw Frisbees, throw balls & play baseball, do Yoga & Zumba!

Do not widen the Pedestrian Bridge into the Park, no more impermeable surfaces in the Park, No impacting the trees' critical root zones! Protecting the Trees are intrinsic to Violet's 1933 Will!

Strolling paths in the Park need to remain as such: Individuals & families stroll comfortably, some with strollers, baby buggies; runners run gently by.

Park paths do not need widening, and are not to become speeding extensions of the Metropolitan Branch Bike Trail, completely changing the nature of the Park. No more hardscape, no Skate Board Park! No Bridge widening. No Zip Line. No Dog Park! No Trenching. Without changing the footprint of the Children's Playground, adding some swings, And especially the new modern see-saws the kids love, would be so used and enjoyed! Socializing can take its natural place in a Garden in the Park. Jesup Blair Park is also an arboretum!

4.9 “Historic Preservation Resources”

We applaud the HP “Historic Preservation Resources” Diverse Analyses, especially:

4.9.3. New Sites or Districts to be Studied as future Historic Preservation Master Plan Amendment(s), PPs 133. SSHS endorses and requests that Weller’s Dry Cleaners receive Master Plan designation!

4.9.4. National Register of Historic Places, PPs 134-137.

We endorse and request these unique Heritage structures receive National Register of Historic Places Designation:

- * Medical Office Building (1111 Spring Street)**
- Metropolitan Building (8720 Georgia Avenue)**
- Montgomery Center (8630 Fenton Street)**
- Operations Research, Inc., Building (1400 Spring Street)**
- Perpetual Bank Building (8700 Georgia Avenue)**
- U.S. Industries Building (949 Bonifant Street)**
- American National Bank Building (8701 Georgia Avenue)**
- Garden and Mid-Rise Apartment District**

We respectfully request that the **Falkland North Parcel be included** within the **Garden Apartment District: Falkland North represents authentic Middle-Missing Housing** since architect Justement’s Falkland Apts’ New Deal inception in 1936, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt cutting the Blue Ribbon opening day. The North Parcel, many apartments with porches, is abundant with fragrant flowering & other significant trees, set in its green terrain with dramatic gorge, providing a natural Park setting with children’s playground & picnic tables for Falkland North residents. At that time, William Blair’s Land of the founding Blair family.

4.9.6. Cultural and Heritage Resources, especially 4.9.6 A, PPs. 137-138.

- Establish a legacy business registry to recognize the economic, cultural, and social contributions of long-standing businesses to the fabric of Silver Spring.**
- Study potential incentives to preserve local, independently owned businesses.**

In synchronicity with the Art Deco Society, we respectfully request that the historic 1938 Silver Spring Shopping Center’s parking lot and its function be preserved: It’s a legal part of the historic resource and the historic context of the Center, its existence allows a clear view of the art deco architecture of the Center from all vantage points. It reverberates with the 1930’s Park & Shop theme, serving its customers. Importantly, from a human caring perspective, the parking’s proximity to the Center makes the Center and the AFI Silver Theater more accessible to older residents, and those with disabilities than the further off parking garages on Wayne and Ellsworth.

We ask that the Adjacent Communities Plan be removed from the Downtown Silver Spring Plan.

Working Together, Equity & Reparations are best served through the Guidance and Protections of our 1967 Montgomery County Fair Housing Law, our “Open Housing Law,” signed into law 1 year before the U.S. government’s 1968 Fair Housing Law.

These results are NOT achieved through the proposed Adjacent Communities Plan.

See https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgpportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=22322

Mo Co's Open Housing Law, 7/20/1967, was proclaimed "nearly a full year before President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the federal Fair Housing Act into law on April 11, 1968."

Montgomery County Proclaims Open Housing Day For Immediate Release: Tuesday, July 31, 2018

[history of the Montgomery County Office of Human rights](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/humanrights/Resources/Files/civil_right_progress.pdf)

https://montgomerycountymd.gov/humanrights/Resources/Files/civil_right_progress.pdf

See 1965-1971, "Years of Activism" "Mo Co Open Housing Law" Passed by Mo Co Council July 20, 1967



Equity & Reparations can best be achieved rather through Already Existing Opportunities & Avenues, Including Adaptive Reuse! One golden Opportunity is the elegant mid-century modern Guardian Bank Building of glass panels and brick at Ga. & Cameron, by noted Mo Co architect Fon J. Montgomery, originally advertised to be developed for Millennials, however, nothing has happened there for years; what a wonderful superb spot for authentic Equitable, Equity Condos or Apt. Homes, for Missing Middle, for the Work Force, what a terrific vital location in DTSS!

Also, PB's 8787 Ga. Ave! Including saving many of its wonderful trees, could have been the perfect Appropriate Model Spot for Equity, Equitable "housing, homes" of many different types, single-family homes, townhouses, condos, duplexes, small apt buildings! A great location also in DTSS! **Let's put on our thinking caps to arrive at other existing Equitable solutions! Let's Work Together!**

Marcie Stickle, SSHS Advocacy Chair, 8515 Greenwood Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912, marcipro@aol.com

SSHS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the all volunteer 501(c)(3) Silver Spring Historical Society is to create and promote awareness and appreciation of downtown Silver Spring's heritage through sponsorship of educational activities and the preservation and protection of historical sites, structures, artifacts and archives.

See also Statements by Mo Co Taxpayers League, Mo Co Civic Federation, & Responsible Growth for Montgomery County, emphasizing Working Together to achieve "inclusiveness, diversity, prosperity."

CARPE DIEM ARTS

Bringing the Arts to Life!

*Promoting the arts and engaging communities
across generations and cultures*

Testimony: Carpe Diem Arts % Busy Graham
Public Hearing before the County Council re. DTSS/AC
February 17, 2022

Thank you Council President Alborno and Council members for the opportunity to speak about the Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan—specifically with regard to the Historic Jesup Blair House.

My name is Busy Graham, and I have been a resident of Silver Spring for 36 years. I am the founder and Executive Director of Carpe Diem Arts, a Silver Spring nonprofit providing a broad range of culturally diverse visual, literary and performing arts programs to our County residents.

I am here today representing Carpe Diem Arts and several other interested nonprofits, plus numerous programming partners.

We are glad to see the DTSS Plan bring some focus to the beautiful 14.5 acre Jesup Blair Park.

Barely mentioned, however, is the Jesup Blair House which is owned by Montgomery Parks/ M-NCPPC and has been vacant for 14 years.

Located within the designated Arts and Entertainment District, the House was built in 1850 and is connected to the founding family of Silver Spring, the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, and President Abraham Lincoln's Cabinet. It also served as the Silver Spring Library from 1934-1957.

The Jesup Blair House could serve as a catalyst for drawing residents to the Park, while also serving as a vibrant center for arts, culture and education, and a venue for major outdoor festivals and other special events.

In addition, the House would provide a much-needed home for several Silver Spring and Takoma Park nonprofits, including Carpe Diem and the Silver Spring Historical Society whose valuable archives would be housed on the lower level and featured in a Period Room.

We believe our vision would revitalize both the Park and the Jesup Blair House, supporting the County's goals for South Silver Spring, while also celebrating our diversity and addressing the priority of equity, access and inclusion.

Now is the time for our County to honor the history of Silver Spring and preserve this unique public resource as a sound investment in a bright future for arts and humanities—and vital community development.

We seek your support for restoring this remarkable property—and ask you to find ways to help fund the estimated \$1.5-2 million rehabilitation.

To learn more about our collective vision, please visit JesupBlairHouse.org

Thank you for your consideration.

M E M O R A N D U M

March 23, 2022

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst

SUBJECT: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan—transportation elements and fiscal impact statement¹

PURPOSE: Develop Committee recommendations

Councilmembers: Please bring your copy of the Final Draft Plan and its Street Sections Supplement to this worksession.

This staff report primarily addresses the Final Draft Plan's elements in *Chapter 3.6: Transportation*. Some technical corrections will be made to the final document, but they are not identified in this staff report. The purpose of this worksession is for the Committee to make recommendations about these matters.

Those commenting on the Final Draft, including Council staff, support most of the transportation recommendations in this Plan. In the interest of time, this staff report addresses recommendations that differ from the Final Draft from the Department of Transportation (DOT), public hearing testimony and correspondence, and Council staff.

Those anticipated to attend include:

Casey Anderson, Chair, Planning Board
Gwen Wright, Director, Planning Department
Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, Down County Planning, Planning Department
Larissa Klevan, Master Plan Supervisor, Down County Planning, Planning Department
Atara Margolies, Planner Coordinator, Down County Planning, Planning Department
David Anspacher, Transportation Supervisor, Countywide Planning, Planning Department
Stephen Aldrich, Transportation Master Planner, Countywide Planning, Planning Department
Hannah Henn, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Andrew Bossi, Director's Office, DOT

¹ Key words: #SilverSpring, plus search terms sector plan, road, intersection, transit, bikeway, sidewalk.

1. Fiscal impact analysis. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), working with DOT and other Executive Branch departments, has forwarded its fiscal impact analysis of the Final Draft Plan (©1-4). OMB estimates the cost of County-borne capital improvements in the Final Draft to be \$707.0 million, of which \$525.7 million are for transportation projects. This total does not include the cost of creating transit center improvements and Green Loop connectors, for which DOT felt there was not enough specificity. The estimated transportation construction costs (in Year 2022 dollars) are:

- \$250 million for a new Jesup Blair Metrorail Station between the Silver Spring and Takoma Metro Stations;
- \$57.7 million for dedicated bus lanes, additional buses, and upgraded bus stops;
- \$15.0 million for new streets for local circulation;
- \$40.6 million to reconstruct streets with narrower and/or fewer travel lanes to create a better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; and
- \$162.4 million for pedestrian and bikeway improvements.

These estimates do not include any land acquisition or utility relocation costs.

The non-transportation costs total \$181.3 million and include:

- \$37.6 million for construction of new school space to accommodate 814 students from the estimated 11,000 multi-family high-rise units anticipated in the Plan;
- \$43.0 million to create South Silver Spring Park, Philadelphia Avenue Park, and Fenton Street Park, and to renovate Jesup Blair, Acorn, and Ellsworth Parks;
- \$9.8 million for other park development related costs;
- \$90.1 million for undergrounding utilities and redeveloping parking garages; and
- \$0.8 million for Department of Fire and Rescue Services costs.

The \$707.0 million impact is an extraordinarily high figure when compared to Plans approved over the past several years. The table below shows the fiscal impact analyses for major plans approved since 2016, updated to 2022 dollars:

County CIP Fiscal Impact of Master and Sector Plans

<i>Plan</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Capital Cost</i>	<i>Capital Cost in FY22\$</i>
Silver Spring CBD	2022	\$ 707,000,000	\$ 707,000,000
Shady Grove	2021	\$ 411,980,000	\$ 426,440,000
Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills	2020	\$ 296,078,000	\$ 313,014,000
Veirs Mill	2019	\$ 175,300,000	\$ 193,303,000
MARC Communities	2019	\$ 187,800,000	\$ 207,087,000
Grosvenor	2017	\$ 57,390,000	\$ 68,989,000
Rock Spring Park	2017	\$ 141,576,000	\$ 170,189,000
White Flint II	2017	\$ 143,332,000	\$ 172,299,000
Bethesda CBD	2016	\$ 132,485,000	\$ 141,225,000
Lyttonsville	2016	\$ 48,100,000	\$ 60,390,000

In the Shady Grove Plan, half of the \$320 million cost of the proposed Montgomery College-Rockville Metro Station was assumed to be borne by the State and Federal governments. If the same 50/50 cost-sharing were assumed for the proposed Jesup Blair Metro Station, the Silver Spring Plan's County fiscal impact would be reduced to \$582.0 million. Nevertheless, this is still an extraordinarily high figure when compared to plans approved over the past several years. The Council should be very concerned about this and other plans that likely overpromise what is affordable, even in the long term.

2. Jesup Blair Metro Station. On p. 129 the Plan calls for evaluating "the feasibility of a new Metrorail station at Jesup Blair Park in event that future development of Jesup Blair Park spurs land use and development changes in the blocks surrounding the park." (DOT's comments are on ©5-8, see especially ©7.) However, no amount of redevelopment on the park site will generate enough demand to warrant its own Metro station. The Montgomery College campus surrounding it has less than half the enrollment than its Rockville campus, where a planned Metro Station there is very questionable. It is unlikely that the single-family residential neighborhoods in Takoma Park and the nearby neighborhoods in the District of Columbia will densify.

A new Metro station at Jesup Blair Park would have to generate significantly more transit patrons to compensate for the loss of ridership from the many thousands of commuters going between the Silver Spring, Forest Glen, Wheaton, and Glenmont stations and Downtown Washington, since they would experience a slower trip because of the extra stop. DOT notes that "Without a more significant effort to justify this station, it is unlikely it would ever be realized" and the recommendation should be removed.

Council staff recommends deleting from the Plan any reference to a potential Jesup Blair Metro Station. By itself this would reduce the County fiscal impact down to \$457.0 million - still a high figure, however.

3. Non-auto-driver mode share (NADMS). The prior Silver Spring sector plan set a goal of 46% for employees commuting to the CBD to arrive by means other than driving. Recent surveys by the Silver Spring Transportation Management District (TMD) note that the NADMS for employees is about 54%. Traffic modeling by the Planning staff projects that with the Plan's recommendations, the NADMS should ultimately rise to 60-61%. The Final Draft recommends an aggregate NADMS goal of 60% for employees commuting into the CBD and CBD residents commuting elsewhere. The Coalition for Smarter Growth recommends a more aggressive goal of 70% (see ©9-13, especially ©12).

Typically, residents living within walking distance of a suburban Metro Station are more likely to take transit to their jobs than are employees commuting to a suburban CBD. Therefore, all else being equal, one would expect an aggregate employee/resident NADMS in a Red Policy Area to be higher than for employees alone, especially in the Silver Spring CBD, where much more housing is anticipated. Also, the modeling does not yet capture the effect on telecommuting, which is waning a bit since COVID's partial retreat, yet likely to be a lasting feature. Finally, as a point of comparison, recall that the aggregate NADMS set for the Bethesda CBD Plan pre-COVID was 55%, but Silver Spring is served by considerably more bus service and will have the Purple Line serving it from both the east *and* west. **For all these reasons, Council staff recommends concurring with the Coalition for Smarter Growth to set the aggregate NADMS goal at 70%.**

4. Connecting across the rail. Noting that the Metrorail and CSX tracks bisect the Silver Spring CBD, the Plan calls for improvements to the ped/bike facilities at the existing crossings at Spring Street, Colesville Road, Georgia Avenue, Burlington Avenue, and the pedestrian bridge at Jesup Blair Park. All the suggested improvements would have a relatively low cost, except for the widening of the Montgomery College/Jesup Blair Park bridge, which DOT estimates will cost \$16,300,000.

Council staff does not recommend including the bridge replacement in the Plan. The existing bridge was built as recently as 2002 and is in good repair. Montgomery College does not allow bikes to be ridden over the bridge, but it is allowable to walk them across. While not perfect, it is an adequate crossing for bicyclists.

The Plan also calls for two new crossings. One would connect from the west end of Silver Spring Avenue over the tracks to East-West Highway between The Bennington and The Silverton high rises. Estimated cost: \$44,900,000. The other would extend from the west end of Cameron Street to and through any redevelopment of The Falklands. Estimated cost: \$20,300,000.

Both connections would occur partially on private property. DOT suggests conditioning these crossings on new development, addressing three points:

- Define the right-of-way or easement requirements in the event of a publicly built connection, such as ensuring unfettered public access and limiting physical, visual, and noise encroachment;
- Allow the connections to be made within private developments, but under defined requirements such as hours of access, ease of navigation and convenience, ADA accessibility, visibility and “obviousness” of the route, wayfinding, etc.; and
- Define “stubs” that might be built by a developer at the point where a future bridge/tunnel might be provided.

Council staff recommends including these points in the Plan. The higher priority should be the connection between Silver Spring Avenue and East-West Highway, as it would break up an extremely larger superblock and is near the center of the CBD. To the extent it can be part of new development project, the more likely it will be affordable. The cost of the Falklands crossing should be borne substantially by any redevelopment there, as it would be the primary beneficiary.

5. Colesville Road north of Downtown. Colesville Road between Spring Street and Sligo Creek Parkway is a six-lane highway and is 60’ wide between the curbs. Its right-of-way varies in width, generally between 80-100’. For many years the road has operated with four lanes southbound and two lanes northbound in the morning peak. In the evening peak it is the opposite: four lanes northbound and two lanes southbound. The Draft US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study published by DOT last year calls for the innermost southbound lane to be a dedicated lane for bus rapid transit (BRT) service during the morning peak, and the innermost northbound lane to be dedicated to BRT during the evening peak.

Following from a Planning Board directive for all planned BRT routes to have dedicated bus lanes in both directions, the Final Draft Plan would designate two of the six lanes as dedicated bus lanes. There are two alternative proposed cross-sections. The cross-section with side-running BRT calls for widening the roadway between the curbs by 4’, so that each bus lane would be 12’ wide. It also recommends a 6’-wide landscaped buffer between the curb and a 12’-wide sidewalk, which is the width

of a shared use hiker-biker trail. The distance between the far edges of the two sidewalks, therefore, would be 100'. Beyond the sidewalks are 10'-wide frontage zones, bringing the total planned width of the right-of-way to 120'. (See Figures 12 and 13 in the Street Sections Supplement on p. 12.²) A cross-section with median-running BRT calls for widening the center lanes to 12', including a 2'-wide buffer between each BRT lane and the adjacent travel lane, an 8'-wide landscaped buffer between the travel lanes and the 12'-wide sidewalk, and a 6'-wide frontage zone beyond that, again bringing the total planned width of the right-of-way to 120'. (See Figures 7 and 8 in the Street Sections Supplement on pp. 9-10.)

DOT notes that its proposed cross-section in the US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study stays within an 80'-wide right-of-way, and it suggests that the Plan adopt its cross section or accept it as an interim stage (©8). The Council has received letters from the Woodside Park community objecting to the proposed cross section. Representative is a letter from Mr. Todd Cooke who avers that reducing the number of peak-direction travel lanes from four to two would result in backups that would result in a significant increase in cut-through traffic, take many front yard fences and trees, interfere with traffic accessing and egressing churches and businesses, and make left-turning into the neighborhood more difficult (©14-16).

Council staff recommends adopting a cross-section showing the 6 lanes as described in the US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study, within a right-of-way of 85'. The slightly wider right-of-way would allow the dedicated bus lanes to have a 12' width, which is a safer width for bus operations. The other elements proposed by the Final Draft that would require a larger right-of-way—the 6'-wide landscaped buffers and the 12'-wide sidewalks—while desirable, would result in too large an impact on adjacent property owners. As Mr. Cooke and others have pointed out, there are alternative routes providing safe bike route into Downtown Silver Spring, so the curbside sidewalks on US 29 do not need to accommodate bikers.

6. Green Loops. The Final Draft calls for two landscaped loop routes that would connect public spaces in Downtown Silver Spring. The Central Loop follows East-West Highway to the west, Burlington Avenue to the south, Fenton Street to the east, and Cameron Street/2nd Avenue/Colesville Road to the north. A road diet—reducing the number of motor vehicle travel lanes—on most of these links would create space for separated bike lanes, ample landscaping, and in some locations a larger sidewalk. The Fenton Street portion of the Central Loop is largely accounted for by the Fenton Street Cycletrack project in the CIP, which is now estimated to cost \$11,561,000 (a 137.9% cost increase from the Approved CIP). DOT estimates the cost of the East-West Highway and Burlington Avenue segments to be \$46,400,000, and it assumes that half of the cost will be borne by the State Highway Administration (SHA). DOT estimates the cost of the Cameron Street segment to be another \$4,800,000; the fiscal impact analysis does not show an estimate for the relatively short 2nd Avenue and Colesville Road segments.

The Outer Loop follows 16th Street and Eastern Avenue to the west, a new route through Jesup Blair Park to the south, lower Fenton Street, and a series of Neighborhood Greenways to the east in East Silver Spring, and Spring Street to the north. The Street Sections Supplement does not provide details

² Figure 13, reflecting the proposed cross-section between Noyes Drive and Spring Street, incorrectly characterizes the total right-of-way width to be 100', but its elements add up to 120'.

of the cross-sections envisioned for the Outer Loop, so the fiscal impact analysis does not have cost estimates for it.³

Finally, the Plan includes a series of Connectors between the two loops. Again, there is no cost estimate for these improvements, as the Plan does not specify what improvements are envisioned there.

It is difficult to discern whether the unprogrammed improvements are worth the investment. A case in point is Cameron Street between Spring Street and 2nd Avenue. It is 48'-wide from curb to curb within a 70'-wide right-of-way, and it includes two 11'-wide travel lanes, two 6'-wide conventional bike lanes, and two 7'-wide parking lanes. The Bicycle Master Plan calls for separated bike lanes.

The Silver Spring Plan recommends removing the north-side parking lane, creating grass buffers between the new, narrower roadway and the proposed separated bike lanes, and another set of landscaped buffers between the bike lanes and sidewalks. It would widen the right-of-way to 75'. (See Figure 30 in the Supplement on p. 22.) As noted above, DOT estimates the cost of Cameron Street improvements between 2nd Avenue and Spring Street to be \$4,800,000.

Council staff recommends leaving Cameron Street as it exists today. The sidewalks are wider today than proposed in the Plan, and pedestrians are buffered on both sides by the parking lanes. The street has sufficiently low volume and speed so that conventional bike lanes provide for safe bike passage. Reconstruction of the street would entail costs and impacts that will not produce corresponding benefits.

7. Other bikeways. Many of the bikeway recommendations (pp. 119-121) repeat those in the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan. As Council staff pointed out at that time, its now \$6 billion cost (in 2022 dollars) is unaffordable in the long term. The Silver Spring Plan recommends additional bikeway improvements that would increase that cost burden even more.

The main highways in the Plan area—Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, 16th Street, and East-West Highway/Burlington Avenue—have higher volumes and a propensity for higher speeds, and so physical protection for biking may require expensive road reconstruction in several locations. Furthermore, as these are State highways, it is plausible that SHA would participate in cost-sharing with the County to build such improvements. On nearly all these roads the Plan calls for road diets that would repurpose two travel lanes in favor of BRT and/or separated bike lanes, which will lead to considerably more traffic congestion. However, except for the segment of Colesville Road north of Spring Street, all these roads are within the Silver Spring CBD—a Red Policy Area in the Growth and Infrastructure (G&I) Policy. Under the G&I Policy there are no longer any limit on the allowable traffic congestion in Red Policy Areas.

On the other hand, most County streets in the CBD have low volume and low speeds such that the need for such protection is not obvious, and the cost of the Plan's proposed improvements would be borne entirely by the County. Therefore, the following review concentrates on the bikeway recommendations for County streets in the Plan area.

³ The right-of-way of Eastern Avenue is entirely within the District of Columbia, so it is not under the County's jurisdiction.

- *Silver Spring Avenue between Georgia Avenue and Fenton Street.* This is a 40'-wide business district street within a 60'-wide right-of-way, which has on-street parking on both sides and wide sidewalks. It has a low volume and low speed. The distance between the building faces varies from about 65' to 70'. The Bicycle Master Plan calls for this block to be a Shared Street with priority shared lane markings.

The Silver Spring Plan recommends the street be rebuilt with one-way separated bike lanes on each side. It recommends removing the on-street parking on the south side of the block and installing 6'- and 3'-wide planted buffers between the bike lanes and the street. Along with 8'-wide sidewalks on both sides, this would require a 70'-wide right-of-way throughout, which presupposes that much of the block will be redeveloped. (See Figure 31 in the Street Sections Supplement on p. 23.) DOT estimates its cost to be \$4,300,000.

Council staff concurs with the recommendation in the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan. While such expenditure for a cycletrack is warranted on a higher volume thoroughfare like Fenton Street, it is not warranted here, where bicyclists can safely share the street with low-speed, low-volume motor vehicle traffic. The parking lanes on each side act as more than adequate buffers for pedestrians.

- *Blair Mill Road between Eastern Avenue and East-West Highway.* This street is about 36'-wide between the curbs within a 60-70'-wide right-of-way and is fronted by multi-family high rises. It has 5'-wide sidewalks with grass buffers at least 6' wide separating them from the curb. There is on-street parking on both sides along most of its length. It mainly serves as access to the high rises and carries very little through traffic. The Bicycle Master Plan does not mention Blair Mill Road, suggesting that it does not require any special treatment for safe biking.

The Silver Spring Plan calls for removing the south side on-street parking, creating a two-way cycletrack there instead. There would also be a 7'-wide planted buffer between the parking lane and the north-side sidewalk and a 6'-wide planted buffer between the travel lanes and south-side bike lanes. (See Figure 35 in the Supplement on p. 25.) DOT estimates its cost to be \$2,400,000.

Council staff recommends designating Blair Mill Road as a Shared Street with priority shared lane markings. Again, the expense and impacts of the cross section on Figure 35 is not warranted.

- *13th Street between Eastern and Georgia Avenues.* This street is about 46'-wide between the curbs and is fronted by multi-family residents, motels, and a few local businesses. It has wide sidewalks with brick pavers and there is on-street parking on both sides along most of its length. Its right-of-way is about 65' wide. It mainly serves as access to the residences and motels on the street and carries very little through traffic. The Bicycle Master Plan recommends creating separated bike lanes.

The Silver Spring Plan calls for removing the south side on-street parking to make space for the separated bike lanes. There would also be landscaped buffers between the bike lanes and the

sidewalks. The Plan would widen the right-of-way to 80'. (See Figure 27 in the Supplement on p. 21.) DOT estimates its cost to be \$4,300,000.

Council staff recommends designating 13th Street as a Shared Street with priority shared lane markings. Again, the expense and impacts of the cross-section on Figure 27 would outweigh the benefits. The parking lanes provide an adequate buffer for pedestrians from motor vehicle traffic, and the volume and speed of that traffic is not high enough to warrant physical separation for bicyclists.

- *1st Avenue between Spring Street and Fenwick Lane.* This street is 48'-wide between the curbs within a 70'-wide right-of-way and is fronted by multi-family high rises. It has 5-10'-wide sidewalks with grass buffers separating them from the curb, and there is on-street parking on both sides along most of its length. As it is only one block long, it mainly serves as access to the high rises and carries very little through traffic. Across from Fenwick Lane is the north entrance to the Cameron Street Garage. The Bicycle Master Plan does not mention 1st Avenue, again suggesting that it does not require any special treatment for safe biking.

The Silver Spring Plan calls for narrowing the travel lanes to 10½', retaining the 8'-wide parking lanes, and creating on each side a 3'-wide grass buffer between the parking lane and a new 5½'-wide bike lane, with an 8'-wide sidewalk to the outside of each bike lane. (See Figure 33 in the Supplement on p. 24.) The proposed curb-to-curb distance is 54'. DOT estimates its cost to be \$3,600,000.

Council staff recommends either designating 1st Street as a Shared Street with priority shared lane markings, or, at most, a Striped Bikeway with conventional bike lanes. To build the wider cross-section on Figure 33 would require reconstruction of the roadway, including relocating utility poles, drainage inlets, and driveway ramps. On the other hand, either signing and marking the street as a Shared Street or marking conventional bike lanes would not require any construction. Within the current curbs a 5'-wide bike lane could be striped in each direction by narrowing each travel lane to 11'.

- *1st Avenue Extended between Fenwick Lane and Cameron Street.* This would be a new street that would break up the large block between Georgia and 2nd Avenues, and it would occur only if the Cameron Street Garage were redeveloped. The Silver Spring Plan calls for two 10½'-wide travel lanes separated from 6½'-wide bike lanes by 6'-wide landscaped buffers. To the outside would be 2'-wide ped/bike buffers and 10'-wide sidewalks. (See Figure 34 in the Supplement on p. 24.) The cumulative width of the cross-section would be 70'.

Council staff recommends the same treatment for this block as Council staff's recommendation for the block to the north, minus the parking lanes. That would result in a cumulative width of 54', which would be easier to accommodate within any redevelopment there.

8. Newell Street. Since the pandemic, the block of Newell Street between East-West Highway and Kennett Street in South Silver Spring has been closed to vehicular traffic, effectively increasing the size of Acorn Park which sits adjacent to it. The Plan calls for this block to be classified as a Shared

Street, defined as “a space that is shared by people using all modes of travel.” Such streets “are designed to create an environment that encourages low vehicle speeds and prioritizes pedestrians” (p, 130). Other proposed Shared Streets are Ellsworth Drive between Fenton Street and Veterans Plaza and Bonifant Street between Ramsey and Georgia Avenues.

Open Streets Montgomery advocates that responsibility for this block’s right-of-way be shifted from DOT to the Parks Department. Although it acknowledges the strides DOT has made in promoting more general use of street rights-of-way (the Streeteries are examples), it notes that the two departments have different missions and rules, and that the Parks Department has more experience in event planning for recreational open spaces (©17-18).

Master and sector plans are not the place to decide such administrative arrangements, but that does not mean such arrangements can’t be forged. For example, DOT has an agreement with Parks to reconstruct and rehabilitate park roads and bridges since DOT has more expertise in this area, but it does so following design guidelines set by Parks. Council staff sees no reason why Newell Street can’t be programmed by Parks following guidelines for use set by DOT.

Should the Council wish for this block to be formally abandoned and incorporated into Acorn Park, then the Plan could specify that. **However, Council staff concurs with the Final Draft that this block be classified as a Shared Street.** The block provides direct vehicular access from East-West Highway for residents of the Mica Condominiums, the Spring Garden Apartments, and the parking garage for the residents of 8045 Kennett Street. Furthermore, fire and emergency vehicle response time from the Silver Spring Fire Station to these residences via Blair Mill Road, East-West Highway, and this block of Newell Street can be quicker than other more circuitous routes, depending on the degree of traffic congestion at the Georgia Avenue/Burlington Avenue/East-West Highway/King Street intersection.

9. Connectivity & Infrastructure Fund. Both OMB and DOT raise significant concerns about the potential creation of this fund and how it would interrelate with the anticipated Silver Spring Unified Mobility Program (©1-2 and ©5-6). This subject will be addressed during the Committee’s April 1 worksession on the Plan.



OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Jennifer Bryant
Director

M E M O R A N D U M

March 6, 2022

TO: Gabe Albornoz, President, County Council

FROM: Jennifer Bryant, Director, Office of Management and Budget 

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement for the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

Please find attached the Fiscal Impact Statement for the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

The proposed Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan provides an update to the 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan, which spurred the downtown revitalization. This Plan expands the boundary from the 2000 Plan by adding “Adjacent Communities,” or blocks from several residential neighborhoods primarily to the north and east of downtown. The Plan area is comprised of about 505 acres and is generally bound by Eastern Avenue to the south, 16th Street to the west, Ballard and Spring Street to the north, and portions of the Seven Oaks-Evans Wood and East Silver Spring neighborhoods to the east.

Total County capital costs are estimated at more than \$707 million with annual operating and maintenance costs of \$17.1 million and one-time operating costs of \$300,000. Many costs, including transit center experience improvements, stormwater management enhancements, utility improvements, unspecified Green Loop connectors, emergency energy hubs, and partnerships, are not included due to the lack of specificity in the plan.

This plan is unusual in that it also proposes establishing a Connectivity and Infrastructure Fund (CIF) which would support primarily transportation projects. As a form of extraction for private development, it would seem more appropriate to treat these funds similar to geographically designated taxes or fees with the County collecting the funds, and the Council ultimately appropriating them. This would place project prioritization within the traditional budget processes and provide transparency in their usage.

As proposed in the plan, the CIF funds could only be used to fund the following improvements:

- Transit Center Arrival Experience;
- Bridge Connection over Metrorail/CSX tracks;
- Public bicycle parking facilities;
- Green Loop improvements beyond the frontage of a redeveloped site;
- Select utility improvements; or
- Other projects identified by the Planning Board.

According to M-NCPPC staff, the funds could generate \$6 million to \$10 million; however, the revenues will depend on what methods developers choose to use to optimize density and design their projects. By comparison, the costs for the bridge connection, public bicycle parking facilities, and green loop improvements alone are estimated to cost in excess of \$66 million – far more the fund will generate. It will be important for the public to understand that the CIF could not be expected to provide more than a small portion of these project costs.

JRB:ebg

cc: Marlene Michaelson, Executive Director, Montgomery County Council
Craig Howard, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Council
Pam Dunn, Senior Analyst, Montgomery County Council
Glenn Orlin, Senior Analyst, Montgomery County Council
Fariba Kassiri, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Dale Tibbitts, Special Assistant to the County Executive
Meredith Wellington, County Executive's Office
Clare Iseli, County Executive's Office
Chris Conklin, Director, Department of Transportation
David Dise, Director, Department of General Services

**County Capital and Operating Cost Estimates Assumed to be Incurred as a Result of the
Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan
3/4/2022**

Capital Improvement Projects

Project		Total County Costs
Transit	Construction transit lanes & separated bikes lanes, additional buses, upgrade bus stops with shelters, and Infill Metrorail station at Jesup Blair Park. (NOTE: Does not include costs for "world-class arrival experience at the transit center" due to lack of clarity on what that includes.)	\$ 307,700,000
Intersections	Continental Crosswalks, and protected intersections	\$ 5,100,000
New Roads	New streets Draper Lane, 1st Avenue, Bonifant-Thayer, and Silver Spring-Sligo	\$ 15,000,000
Existing Roads	Wayne Avenue, Blair Road, Bonifant Street, Ellsworth Drive, Newell Street, and Strategic Utility and Streetscape Infrastructure Improvements	\$ 40,600,000
Ped / Bike Focused	East-West Highway; Burlington Avenue; Spring Street; Fenton Street; Wayne Avenue; 1st Avenue; 13th Street; Dixon Avenue; Selim Road; Blair Mill Road; Silver Spring Avenue; Cameron Street; Mayor-Fenton Pedestrian Connection; Wayne-Bonifant Pedestrian Connection; Capital Crescent Trail; Metropolitan Branch Trail; Missing Sidewalks; Short-Term Bike Parking; Long-term bicycle parking at transit stations (SSTC, Library); Green Loop Connectors; New Connection across CSX at East-West Hwy and Silver Spring Ave; New Connection across CSX at E Falkland La and Apple Ave; Widen bridge + ramp of Mont College / Jesup Blair Park bridge; Silver Spring Shopping Center parking lot treatments; Data Collection; Protected Crossings; and Bike / Ped Priority Area (BiPPA). (NOTE: Green loop costs for non-bikeway segments have not been included due to a lack of detail.)	\$ 157,300,000
Miscellaneous	Undergrounding Utilities, and Redevelop Public Garages	\$ 90,100,000
MCPS-Capital Budget Impact	Potential Impact from Multi-Family High-Rise Units (11,000 Units)	\$ 37,600,000
MCFRS-Capital Budget Impact	Potential Impact from Multi-Family High-Rise Units (11,000 Units) One time cost for : a) one Peak BLS transport (staffed by two FFs 12 hours/day, 5 days/week), and b) one 24/7 BLS Transport(staffed by two FFs 24 hours/day, 7 days/week)	\$ 800,000
M-NCPPC Park Development Projects Capital Budget Impact	1.Renovation of Jesup Blair Park (Countywide Urban Recreational Park) 2.Creation of South Silver Spring Park (Community-use Urban Recreational Park) 3.Renovation of Ellsworth Park (Community-use Urban Recreational Park) 4.Creation/Consolidation/Renovation of Fenton Street Park (Neighborhood Green) 5.Renovation of Acorn Park (Pocket Green) 6.Creation of Philadelphia Ave Park (Pocket Green)	\$ 43,000,000
M-NCPPC Park Development Projects Capital Budget Impact	Land Acquisition & Site Cleanup Costs Land acquisition for the second parcel of South Silver Spring Urban Recreational Park and the proposed additions for Fenton Street Urban Park is included. Demolition of existing buildings and removal of existing pavement to prepare for future park use is also included. Year of implementation is unknown due to uncertain timing for completion of land acquisitions.	\$ 9,800,000
		\$ 707,000,000

Operating Budget Impacts (excl. Maintenance and Utilities)	All Transportation - related	\$ 5,968,000
MCPS- operating Budget Impact	Potential Impact from Multi-Family High-Rise Units (11,000 Units)	\$ 8,894,000
MCFRS- Operating Budget Impact	Potential Impact from Multi-Family High-Rise Units (11,000 Units) One time cost for : a) one Peak BLS transport (staffed by two FFs 12 hours/day, 5 days/week), and b) one 24/7 BLS Transport(staffed by two FFs 24 hours/day, 7 days/week), annual costs for both units \$1,241,000	\$ 2,242,000
M-NCPPC Park Development Projects - Operating Budget Impact	Estimate average operating cost \$15,810.00/acre/year Estimated total operating cost: 23-acre x \$15,810/acre/yr. = \$363,630/yr.	\$ 364,000
		\$ 17,468,000

Notes

- (1) Total estimated capital costs are \$808M, \$707M - County, \$91.4M - State and Federal, \$1.6M -Private, and \$8M - Others . Only County costs are shown in the chart above. Costs do not include Land, ROW or Utilities costs.
- (2) Total Operating budget estimates are \$19M - County (\$17.5M), State and Federal (\$80,000), Private (\$145,500), and Others (1.2M). Only County costs are shown in the chart above
- (3) Maintenance and Operations costs are not included in capital costs. It is typical practice along State corridors to assume a 50/50 split in costs unless there is strong cause to assume otherwise. In practice the actual splits in such costs may vary significantly.
- (4) Rounding - individual values rounded up to nearest \$100,000 for report
- (5) Inflation - All Dollars are in 2022 Dollars.
- (6) The plan presumes the establishment of a Connectivity and Infrastructure Fund (CIF) which M-NCPPC staff believe could generate \$6M-\$10M to be used for specific projects. With only three of the six project categories able to be estimated, costs for the projects will exceed \$67 million. As a result, the CIF will only fund a small portion of the sited projects.
- (7) There was insufficient specificity to provide estimates for costs for some plan components. The most significant of these could be: Transit center experience improvements; stormwater management enhancements; utility improvements; unspecified Green Loop connectors; emergency energy hubs; and partnerships.

Marc Elrich
County Executive



Christopher R. Conklin
Director

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MEMORANDUM

February 8, 2021

TO: Meredith Wellington, Land Use Planning Policy Analyst
Office of the County Executive

FROM: Hannah Henn, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy
Department of Transportation (MCDOT)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hannah Henn", is written over the printed name and title.

SUBJECT: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan
Planning Board Draft – MCDOT Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Winter 2022 Planning Board Draft of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (“the Plan”). MCDOT strongly supports the vision of the Plan and believes Silver Spring has the potential to become a renowned example of infrastructure that supports pedestrians, bicycling, and transit but are concerned that the Plan’s recommendations do not adequately support the intended vision.

The comments below summarize MCDOT’s most significant concerns related to the ability to achieve the Plan’s vision. Many of these comments have been made previously by our staff as they coordinated with Planning staff throughout the year. Footnotes in this memo are used to reference numbered comments included in our attached, detailed technical comments.

- 1) **Connectivity & Infrastructure Fund; UMP:** We have multiple concerns with the Connectivity and Infrastructure Fund (CIF) pertaining to revenue collection, project implementation, and the relationship with the Unified Mobility Program (UMP).¹¹⁶

It is unclear how these revenues would be assessed and collected. Would these revenues be implemented by the Planning Department, or by the Department of Permitting Services? If Planning Board, is there legal authority for the Planning Department to collect these revenues, and what would the mechanisms be for Planning to spend the revenues on implementation projects?

If the Planning Department intends to directly construct infrastructure projects, MCDOT would have significant concerns about the structure, capacity, and authority for the Planning Department to engage in these activities. Alternately, if the Planning Board intends to use the CIF to issue grants for projects, there is potential for a conflict with Council funding authority and additional complexity to funding processes.

The Plan does not include any references to the UMP as defined in the 2020 Growth and Infrastructure Policy, nor does it clearly state whether the CIF is complementary to or replaces the UMP. It is MCDOT's intent that an UMP be implemented concurrently or as nearly following this Plan as feasible, and MCDOT intends to submit materials relating to the UMP in the near future.¹¹⁷

- 2) **Complete Communities:** There do not appear to be any substantive references to Complete Communities, which has been a major focus of the parallel Thrive Montgomery 2050 ("Thrive") effort. While Thrive has not been finalized, this document could still reference Complete Communities as a concept worth pursuing if that is a priority for the Planning Board. Silver Spring could serve as an appropriate and attainable first application of Complete Communities methodologies and analysis tools.

Are there important land use types that are not currently available to the Plan area? And how would the Plan propose to achieve these? We note our comments on Thrive relating to how each master plan might define and apply three variables in providing measurable and actionable Complete Communities implementation. These variables are (1) travel mode, (2) travel time, and (3) target destinations.³⁹

- 3) **Transit:** Considering the opportunities of the Plan area, the transit section should be expanded to include recommendations for increased MARC service⁶⁸ and provide more information on existing and planned bus services, particularly regional and commuter buses.⁶⁹ A map should be included that shows transit services serving Silver Spring.⁷⁰ The Plan should acknowledge the potential significant impacts of the ongoing Ride On Reimagined and Metrobus Redesign Study.

- 4) **Infill Metrorail Station:** The plan proposes an infill Metrorail Station by Jesup Blair Park. For such a station to be realized, the Plan must make a more overt effort to identify right-of-way needs, address park impacts, and substantially increase densities in the vicinity of the proposed station. Without a more significant effort to justify this station, it is unlikely that it would ever be realized. If the Plan is not committed to seeing such a station be constructed, this recommendation should be removed.⁷²
- 5) **Conflicting Information:** The Plan includes multiple cases of unclear or conflicting information:
- While the narrative and recommendations on page 130 reference several streets as being Shared Streets, the Streets Map and Table on pages 133-137 do not show any shared streets at all. As the map and table are more likely to be used in practice, it is important that these reflect what is intended by the Plan.⁸⁰
 - The Plan does not include a road diet along the segment of 16th Street south of East-West Highway. However, the Street Sections Supplement does appear to show a road diet on this segment.⁹⁰
 - The Streets Table on page 134 states that dedicated transit lanes are to be included along 16th Street, but the Planned Lanes column and the Street Sections Supplement both do not reflect transit lanes nor does there appear to be any narrative in the Plan regarding such transit lanes.⁹¹
 - The Street Sections Supplement shows two-way separated bike lanes on both sides of Colesville Road south of Draper Lane but the Plan calls for two-way separated bike lanes on only one side and sidepath on the other side in this segment.¹³²
 - An extension of Draper Lane is shown in the Streets Map on page 133 but is not shown on page 58.³³
 - The Bike Map and the Green Loop Map appear to have several inconsistencies with each other.⁵⁶
 - Some line items in the Streets and CIP Tables appear to be duplicative with other items,^{95,119} some street segments appear to be missing from the Streets Table,⁹⁶ and multiple transportation projects appear to be missing from the CIP Table.¹²⁰⁻¹²³

- 6) **Railway Crossings:** The new connections across the railroad tracks should include language as to how these connections might be implemented as part of private developments.¹⁵

Should you have any questions regarding our comments on the Plan, please feel free to contact me or Mr. Andrew Bossi, Senior Engineer, at andrew.bossi@montgomerycountymd.gov.

HH:AB

cc: Chris Conklin, MCDOT
Gary Erenrich, MCDOT
Andrew Bossi, MCDOT

February 16, 2022

Montgomery County Council
Stella Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (Support)

Testimony for February 17, 2022

Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager

Thank you, Council President Alborno and Councilmembers. My name is Jane Lyons and I'm testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We support the draft of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, although we believe there is room for improvement to think more strategically, creatively, and boldly about certain elements, such as affordable housing. In general, we are excited that the plan embraces downtown Silver Spring as the right place to grow, and to grow in a way that supports connectivity, resiliency, and health.

Silver Spring is where people want to live, and we need to take steps to make sure it is somewhere that is welcoming for everyone, and that maintains and celebrates diversity. To do this, the plan needs more concrete strategies for preserving existing income-restricted and market-rate affordable housing, creating more mixed-income housing, and supporting local businesses.

The biggest area for opportunity for affordable housing involves the redevelopment of the downtown's underutilized parking garages, and that the plan should set ambitious goals to use this public land for public good, and consider models such as a community land trust. Furthermore, as recent research from the Brookings Institution shows, diverse housing types help to create diverse neighborhoods. We urge you to allow more housing types in the adjacent communities.

We are excited about proposals to create two new pedestrian connections over the train tracks, redesigning dangerous streets, and allowing for more height and density to achieve maximum flexibility in redevelopment. However, we would like to see the plan to have specific recommendations for locating new street trees, improved stormwater management, public restrooms, bike parking, and additional lighting.

Please see below for our full, detailed comments on the Planning Board's draft plan:

- **The Green Loop (2.2.2.)**

We do not believe a loop is the best design choice, given that a grid generally is more efficient and improves connectivity better than a loop. There is no reason not to include all of Colesville Road or Georgia Avenue in this vision for green, multimodal streets. In fact, that is exactly the vision outlined for Montgomery County's arterial roads and future corridor-focused growth corridors (which includes Colesville Rd and Georgia Ave) in the current PHED committee draft of Thrive 2050.

The primary component on the Green Loop or similar idea should be protected bike lanes. Furthermore, this section of the plan would also benefit from an explanation as to how the Green Loop integrates with the already envisioned downtown Silver Spring bike network.

- **District-specific recommendations (2.3.)**

Metro Center: We strongly agree with the recommendation to have the highest intensity commercial development in the Metro Center District. This district has been underutilized for far too long. The idea to have a new landmark building at the Transit Center Development Site is especially desirable, and we concur that no parking should be provided given the site's proximity to multiple modes of high-quality transit. We would like the county to encourage, partner, and prioritize space in this future development for child care, which would be convenient not just for downtown workers but for commuters on Metro and MARC.

South Silver Spring: This is clearly the district with the most opportunity for redevelopment and positive change. Within this district, we would like to see the plan also recommend making the Newell Street closure permanent and redesigning the intersection of East-West Highway, Georgia Avenue, and Burlington Avenue to prioritize the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Newell Street's closure has reactivated Acorn Urban Park as a place for people to gather and socialize, and this is at-risk of being lost if the street is to return vehicular traffic. Finally, the specifics of The Blairs Master Plan are unclear, but should include the continued service of a full-sized grocery store for this important location.

Adjacent communities: The built form of the adjacent communities does not allow for a step-down transition with the high-rise buildings in the CBD and would benefit from gentle density, such as with three to five story buildings, connecting the CBD to lower density neighborhoods. We applaud the planners for considering allowing different housing types, but this underlying issue will not be addressed by only allowing buildings that are "compatible with the surrounding development" in terms of height and massing. These properties are appropriate for more than just house-scale duplexes and triplexes. The plan's own Housing Appendix points to the efficacy of six-plexes as a good option for lower cost multifamily housing.

Also, this plan should not rely on the Attainable Housing Strategies guidelines for downtown Silver Spring's adjacent communities because it is unclear when, and if, those recommendations will be

formally adopted. Furthermore, the AHS recommendations encourage consideration of medium-scale (three to four stories) and large-scale (four to five stories) attainable housing in master plans, such as this. Silver Spring offers one of the best opportunities for the County Council to creatively test incorporation of medium-scale housing as a transition from a downtown and as a means to offer more attainable housing options.

Finally, we strongly support the goal to maintain a mature tree canopy in the adjacent communities and would like to see more details on standards for how this should be achieved.

- **Economic Growth (3.2.)**

To celebrate and maintain the diversity of Silver Spring, it is important that its businesses continue to serve a diverse and evolving clientele. We believe this plan should include more incentives and programs that would help to develop businesses for and from within the existing community.

The recommendation from Fenton Village to ensure buildings are divided into smaller components, instead of one large, monolithic structure, should be true of the whole plan area to allow for small businesses to thrive.

- **Affordable Housing (3.3.)**

We urge you to revert to the public hearing draft's original proposal to require 15 percent moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) or other DHCA-equivalent affordable housing for all residential projects, rather than just Optional Method projects.

In addition, the biggest opportunity for affordable housing in the plan area are the many county-owned parking garages and lots. Any county-owned land that is redeveloped should prioritize mixed-income housing with inclusion of a high percentage of deeply affordable and affordable units (30% or more). In addition to this, publicly owned properties such as these are also a unique opportunity to try out new models for affordable housing, such as a community land trust. This goal should be restated throughout the document whenever discussing the redevelopment of public parking garages or lots.

The plan falls short in identifying where existing affordable housing should be preserved. The plan should use the department's housing preservation study, which includes a focus on this plan area, to identify which properties are most at-risk and which tools would be most helpful to preserve those units/properties.

Additionally, the plan also misses the mark on the goal to facilitate the development of a variety of housing types. If all that is allowed are large apartment buildings in the CBD and 1-3 unit homes in the adjacent communities, then the plan area will not achieve this goal. We recommend allowing more medium-scale attainable housing types in the adjacent communities.

Finally, we would like to see the plan explore potential incentives for condominium development to create more homeownership opportunities.

- **Urban Design (3.4.)**

We do not support the plan's recommendation for a Design Advisory Panel. These types of panels too often end up prioritizing subjective design opinions of a small set of residents and can lead to slower progress on redevelopment projects that are beneficial for the community at-large. We recommend creating urban design guidelines to ensure that new construction in Silver Spring achieves high-quality design standards.

- **Parks (3.5.4.)**

We strongly support a permanent closure of Newell Street to vehicular traffic and expand Acorn Urban Park, and recommend its inclusion in the plan. Even with the new plan for a South Silver Spring Urban Recreational Parklet, an expanded Acorn Park is desirable for this rapidly growing neighborhood. We are glad to see the draft recommend that Newell Street continue to function as a temporary park until the proposed South Silver Spring Park project gets implemented, but urge the Newell Street closure to be permanent.

- **Transportation (3.6.)**

Bicycle Parking: We are glad to see the plan talk about bicycle parking, but more needs to be done to identify where more bike parking is needed.

Pedestrian Network: Similarly, we are glad to see the plan recommend increasing and improving the quality of pedestrian-scale lighting, but would like to see the plan go further by identifying where increased and improved lighting is needed throughout the plan boundary.

Transportation Demand Management: We encourage a more ambitious goal for Non-Auto Driver Mode Share than 60 percent, given that a NADMS of 54 percent has already been achieved. Our recommendation is 70 percent.

Parking and Loading: Downtown Silver Spring should not have minimum parking requirements. These are costly requirements that are not aligned with climate goals. The plan should also recommend the unbundling of parking leases from commercial and residential leases so that residents can see the true cost of parking. Removing parking minimums and unbundling parking prices would help reduce the demand for parking, which in turn would help reduce the cost of construction for new housing.

- **3.8 Community Facilities**

Over the next 20 years, downtown Silver Spring should strive to be more welcoming by offering public restrooms across the plan area. This plan should recommend a strategy for identifying locations and operational options.

Conclusion: We hope that the Council will consider and include our recommended amendments.

Date: February 12, 2022

Subject: Critical issues regarding the SSDAC Plan meeting on 2/15/2022

To: The Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Council

As a resident of the Woodside Park community that is located directly north of downtown Silver Spring, I very strongly encourage the Montgomery County Council to support the two resolutions that were passed with overwhelming support by the Woodside Park Community Association.

Resolution #1 – Please remove the small sliver of Woodside Park that was included in the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities (SSDAC) Plan from the SSDAC region. The families in these 17 residences are closely integrated into the personal, social, religious, and educational networks of the Woodside Park community. Any plan that treats these families as being separate from the rest of Woodside Park does not serve their best interests as such integral members of our community. Indeed, the second resolution was prompted by the fact that the SSDAC Plan runs contrary to the safety, health, and other interests of the entire Woodside Park community.

Resolution #2 – Please table the new transportation schematics for the section of Colesville Road from Spring Street to Sligo Creek Pathway that were presented in the SSDAC Plan Supplement until they are fully reconciled during public discussions with the different schematics presented in the Rt 29 Reliability and Mobility Study. The schematics in the SSDAC Supplement are truly objectionable for following reasons:

- Most of the SSDAC Supplement schematics for this section of Colesville Road extend beyond the boundaries of the designated SSDAC region.
- The schematics presented in the Rt. 29 Study were the result of several years of traffic studies and public discussions with the residents living along the Rt. 29 corridor. **By contrast, the Woodside Park community was first made aware of the shocking SSDAC plans for this section of Colesville Road when the SSDAC Supplement was published without any public discussion just two weeks ago on February 1, 2022.**
- The Rt. 29 Study plans for **5 car lanes and one managed dedicated bus lane** on Colesville Road from Spring Street to Sligo Creek Parkway (see Fig. 32 on p. 93), whereas the SSDAC Supplement proposes **4 car lanes and two fixed dedicated bus lanes** for both median transitway (see Figs. 7 & 8 on pp. 9-10) and curbside transitway (see Figs. 12 & 13 on p. 12) options. The decrease from 5 car lanes to 4 would unavoidably result in a huge increase in

spillover traffic cutting through adjacent communities, including Woodside Park. The plan for a single managed dedicated bus lane as presented in the Rt 29 Motility and Reliability Study provides a much more effective approach for managing the traffic flow on Colesville Road between Sligo Creek Parkway and Spring Street

- **According to state documents, the right-of-way for this section of Colesville Road is 80 wide.** The current road is constructed of 6 lanes of 10-foot widths, with 5-foot-wide sidewalks or combined 4-foot-wide sidewalks and 1-foot-wide buffers on both sides. Thus, the current road and sidewalk combination is using 70 feet of that right-of-way. It appears that this section of Colesville Road is the only section outside of downtown Silver Spring that does not have a median strip because the right-of-way does not have sufficient width to allow for constructing a median.
- The Rt 29 Study respects the established right-of-way of 80 feet, and thus, its plans show no indication of extending beyond it. **However, the SSDAC Supplement assumes a unilateral and unpublicized expansion of the right-of-way of this section of Colesville Road to 120 feet for the both median transitway (see Figs. 7 & 8 on pp. 9-10) and the curbside transitway (see Figs. 12 & 13 on p. 12) options.** These schematics call for using a total of 108 feet for the road-and-sidewalk combination from that 120-foot right-of way in the case of median transitway option and 100 feet from that right-of-way in the case of the curbside transitway option. **This aggressive use of the proposed new Colesville right-of-way would unavoidably consume most of the front yards of the single-family residences along Colesville Road.** The owners and their families would almost literally step off their front porches onto the 12-foot-wide sidewalk. The privacy-maintaining, noise-reducing, and shade-providing fences, trees, and other amenities in their front yards would all be removed by this proposed expansion.
- The schematic proposed in the SSDAC Supplement would also interfere with the operations of several churches and commercial establishments, such as Mrs. K's/Zinnia Restaurant, located on this section of Colesville Road. **Of particular impact is the landmark restaurant building formerly known as Mrs. K's Tollhouse and now renovated as Zinnia, whose front wall is located 40 to 45 feet from the center of Colesville Road just outside the current 80-foot-wide right-of-way.** Simply put, the proposed right-of-way expansion in the SSDAC Supplement would consume the entire front dining room of the Mrs. K's/Zinnia restaurant.
- The 12-foot-wide sidewalks drawn in the Colesville Road schematics in the SSDAC Supplement are apparently intended to serve as bike paths. **The Supplement ignores the presence of an existing bike path with green signage that connects between downtown Silver Spring and the**

intersection of Colesville Road at Sligo Creek Parkway. This well-designed path runs parallel to Colesville Road via Ellsworth Drive, which is a restricted-entrance, 40-foot-wide street that carries little car traffic.

For all these reasons, I believe that Council is well-advised to table the schematic plans for the section of Colesville Road from Spring Street to Sligo Creek Parkway in the SSDAC Supplement until they are made compatible with the existing right-of-way and the bus lane plan as presented in the Rt 29 Study.

I thank you for your attention to these urgent matters.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Cooke

1305 Noyes Drive

Woodside Park

Silver Spring, MD 20910

**Testimony on the Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan
from Alison Gillespie on behalf of Open Streets Montgomery
February 17, 2022**

Thanks for the chance to speak tonight.

I attended many meetings about the DTSS plan over the past year, and overall I see a lot to like in this final version, especially as it concerns parks. Tonight I'm here speaking on behalf of Open Streets Montgomery, a coalition led by myself, Peter Gray and Kristy Daphnis working to rethink existing paved spaces for things other than driving in our urban areas.

I want to specifically address the need to make Acorn Park permanently include Newell Street and further ask that the expanded park be run by Montgomery Parks, not by the Department of Transportation as is called for in the plan.

Two years ago, the county did a fantastic thing and closed off Newell Street in South Silver Spring at the request of many neighbors who wanted safe, open-air recreation space during lockdowns. The result was that a very tiny park that was almost never used due to its unpleasant proximity to cars became a popular neighborhood town square.

As the COVID months wore on and became years, the park was a place where people could meet, socialize, and even enjoy Parks and Recreation Department programming. Planners always talk about the process of placemaking, and this was organically occurring placemaking happening in real time. Part of the reason for this was that South Silver Spring had long been a "park desert" – and was lacking open space for families to play. Many had been hungry for this kind of open space among the high-rises for years before lockdowns ever happened.

We are disappointed that the county has dragged its feet on making this new, wonderful expansion permanent.

The DTSS plan calls for the road to be closed but used as a "flex street." While we are big supporters of flex streets, we do not think this is the right location. We think that it would be better to leave the paved area as an open space that could sometimes be used by vehicles during special events or large emergencies.

Part of our concern is that you would have the same small space run and managed by two entities that have very different mission statements and goals, and measure success by very different metrics.

But also, DOT's primary mission, in most circumstances, has been to manage space along our roadways for the primary purpose of mobility - vehicular, pedestrian, and cyclist traffic. While DOT may have dipped its toe into more "recreational" uses of street space with its "Shared Streets" program over the past 2 years, Newell Street and the opportunity it presents over the long term involve a much different set of management skills - event management, noise management, recreational programming, etc.

To most users of this space, the distinction between the MCDOTs rules and Parks' rules will be confusing, and having two agencies to talk to about anything like vagrancy, litter, noise or other safety issues may prove to be a real problem for the community moving forward. In my experience the Parks department is excellent with such issues.

So again, we at Open Streets Montgomery request that you make Newell Street's closure permanent and put it under the control of Montgomery Parks, NOT the Department of Transportation.

Thanks for your time and attention.