

Bethesda Downtown Plan

Scope of Work

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT



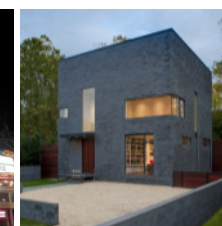
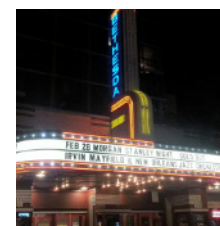
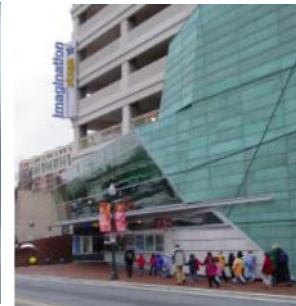
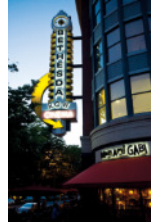
Location

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Community

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Downtown

- 10,600 people
- age distribution comparable to county
 - 22-34 at 40%, 2x county average
- predominantly non-hispanic white
- highly educated
- average household income \$206,766
- higher proportion use of public transit



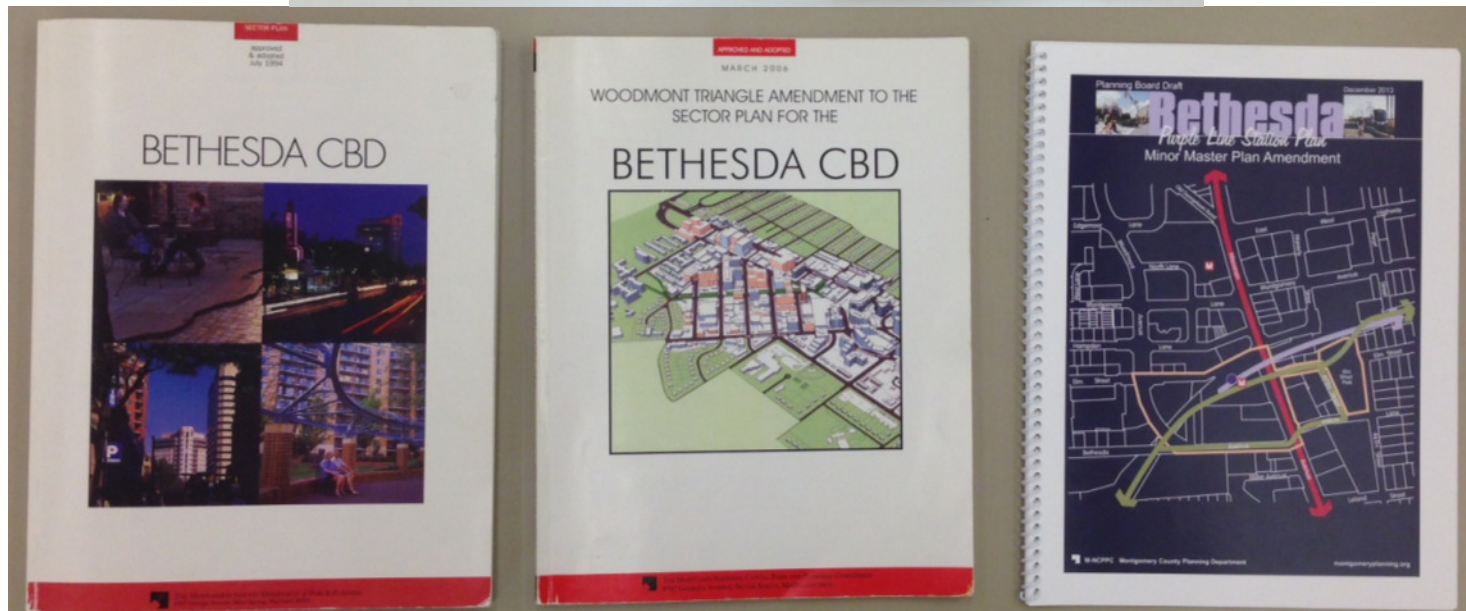
Development

- 3,120 du
- 2.9M sf. office & retail
- 2/3 unbuilt



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Planning Framework



Plan Boundary



Purpose

- sustain success
- remain competitive: employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation
- retain – and enhance –community character
- leverage existing amenities, partnerships, and infrastructure



Sustainability

- economic
- social
- environmental



Economic Sustainability

- promote flexibility
- incentivize expanded affordability
- enrich social capital: gathering places
- revitalize public spaces
- catalytic partners and projects
- enhance public realm
- make best advantage of transit



Social Sustainability

- prioritize compatibility
- enhance recreation opportunities
- lighter/quicker/cheaper implementation of public amenities
- address the community impacts
- new local centers of activity
- new parks and open space



Environmental Sustainability

- 2050: reduce greenhouse gas 80%
- reward greener buildings
- improve walking, cycling safety
- green space Downtown
- environmental street functions



Outreach

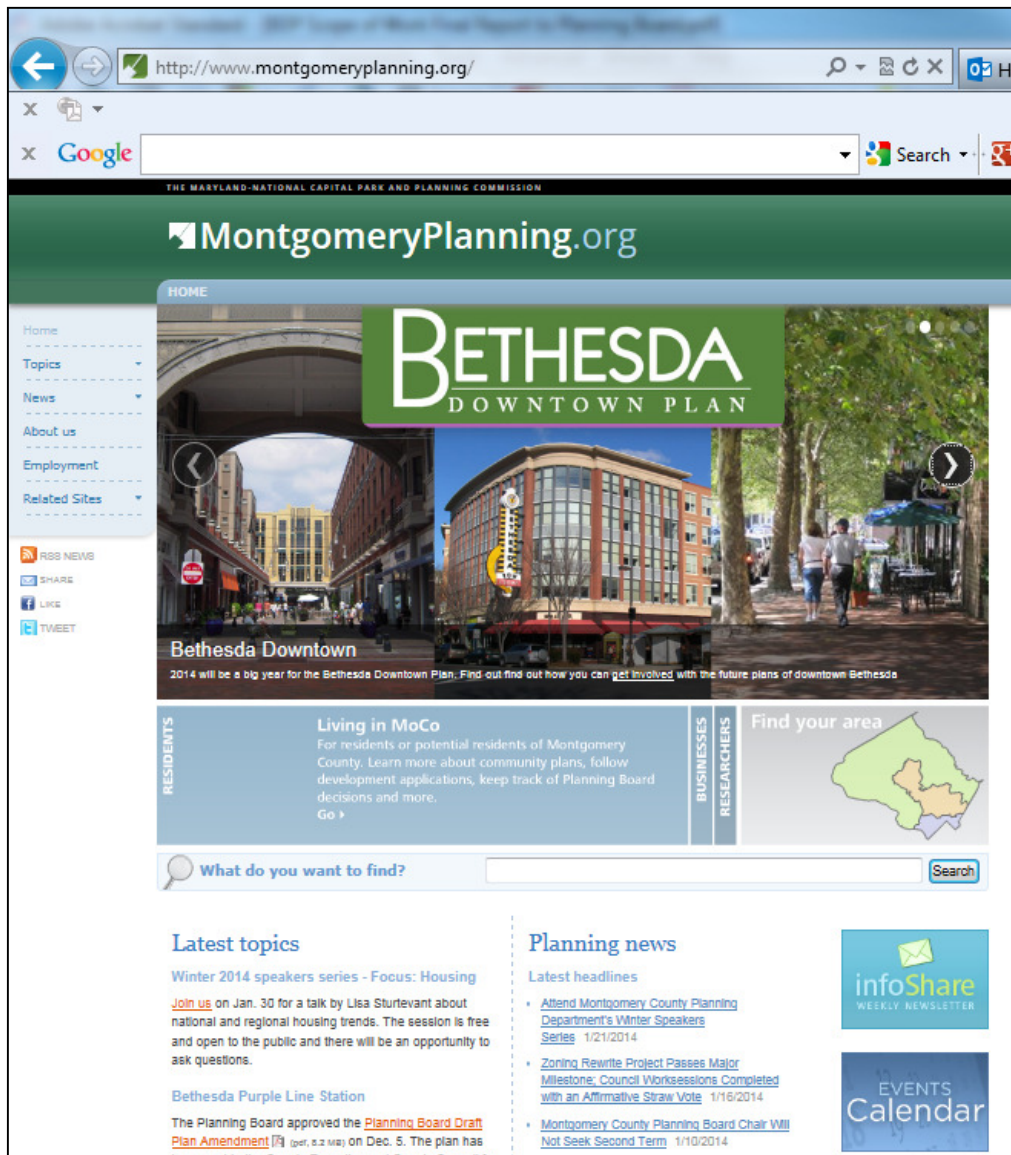
- inclusive
- electronic and social media + face-to-face meetings
- many choices of how
- many people and groups to engage



Outreach

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the homepage of MontgomeryPlanning.org. The browser's address bar shows the URL http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/. The page features a navigation menu on the left with links for Home, Topics, News, About us, Employment, and Related Sites. Below the menu are social media sharing options for RSS News, Facebook Like, and Twitter Tweet. The main content area is dominated by a large banner for the Bethesda Downtown Plan, which includes a photograph of a street scene and the text "Bethesda Downtown" and "2014 will be a big year for the Bethesda Downtown Plan. Find out how you can get involved with the future plans of downtown Bethesda". Below the banner are two columns: "Living in MoCo" for residents and "Find your area" with a map. At the bottom, there are sections for "Latest topics" (Winter 2014 speakers series) and "Planning news" (Attend Montgomery County Planning Department's Winter Speakers Series, Zoning Rewrite Project Passes Major Milestone, Montgomery County Planning Board Chair Will Not Seek Second Term). There are also buttons for "infoShare WEEKLY NEWSLETTER" and "EVENTS Calendar".

Outreach



Outreach

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/bethesda_downtown/index.sh

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Crosswalks and the Arts

As we proceed, we will share with you items of interest such as this, that inspire our thinking about downtown Bethesda. If you come across any images or articles that you would like to share, please send them to us. This one is from an article from Atlantic Cities on the web. Please note, this type of "art intervention" at an intersection, would require approval of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and, where a state highway is involved, the State Highway Administration. In addition, the cost of implementation and assumption of maintenance responsibilities would need to be addressed. That being said, what do you think? The full article and more pictures can be seen at <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2013/12/>. Below the zipper crosswalk image is one from Seattle from one of our transportation engineers, that illustrates how varied these designs can be.




What We are Doing Now

Yes, we are working hard to meet this Friday's internal deadline for summarizing existing conditions in Bethesda. We are looking at everything from demographics, to traffic, to carbon footprint to land use to open space, to jobs and housing balance. With this and with what you have told us so far in meetings and via social media, we will create a summary of issues we believe the plan should address, a work schedule showing steps and "products" at each step, as well as the timing of public meetings and other outreach to you. We refer to this as our scope of work for the plan.

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Montgomery Planning

Downing - 10 days ago
I'd love to see more consideration towards more pedestrian and cyclist friendly design. Protected bike lanes (or at this point, more bike lanes) could facilitate more family-friendly bike commuting. I currently do not feel safe enough to ride on the roads with my young children and find myself using the car more than I would were I in a more pedestrian/cycling friendly city. Consider double-width sidewalks to facilitate foot and stroller traffic (and in nice weather, outdoor seating), and perhaps even have a bike lane at the sidewalk level (see the City of Cambridge, Ma for an example). Consider having major crosswalks raised to the sidewalk level so pedestrians do not have to step down into the street to cross. This forces motorists to slow down when driving through crosswalks (see again, Cambridge's example). More enforcement of proper motorist behavior could go a long way in traffic calming!

Lilan - 2 months ago
I would like to add my support to more green space and especially a dog run or dog park where dogs can be let off leash. Nonwood Park would be ideal since there is space at the northwest corner that is not usually used. At the same time, I think ground cover like the spongy material at the toddlers playground that is soft and porous would be ideal. Pebbles and gravel are too hard on dog feet and grass can get muddy.

Bethesda Planner - Lilan - 2 months ago
Lilan, Thank you for your comment about the need for more green space and a well-designed dog park for Bethesda.
Best, Bethesda Planner/Margaret

Wendy in Bethesda - 3 months ago
Who is in charge of implementing the ideas that surface at these meetings? Suppose we'd like to expand the pedestrian zones, beyond Bethesda Row. (Say, close Bethesda Avenue where the Apple Store is, on weekends). Whom do we approach about this? There were a lot of ideas written in black marker on white paper. What happens to those pieces of paper? Do they just get tossed after the meeting? My sense is that the developers of hideous high-rises have the ear of the planners more than those of us whose ideas are written in black marker on paper: the need for a Bethesda Green, akin to a village green, or pedestrian-friendly spaces, or dog runs and cultural amenities.
Thank you for listening.

Bethesda Planner - Wendy in Bethesda - 3 months ago
Thank you for your comment, Wendy. Very good questions.

#1 - Who is in charge of implementing the ideas that surface at these meetings? Yes, it depends on the idea. Weekend closure of a portion of Bethesda Avenue is considered an "operational" issue which is under the jurisdiction of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. I will forward your question to them and to the Bethesda Urban Partnership which arranges with MCDOT for street closures for special events, such as the Taste of Bethesda. This idea can also be incorporated into the sector plan as part of a vision for the area or recommended design features, which ultimately will be subject to approval of MCDOT. Other ideas from these meetings are also being reviewed by us to determine which are sector plan issues and which are issues that should be forwarded to another entity and which are both.

#2 - I read the ideas and record each one of them. I will be sure to include your ideas from your comments here and sincerely invite you to remain involved. All the recorded comments and ideas from the meetings are then circulated to my colleagues on the Bethesda Downtown Plan Team and posted online. We will then propose a "scope of work" to the Planning Board that will recommend issues to be addressed in our work.

#3 - We definitely want balanced participation and understand that development professionals do this for a living and community members volunteer on their own time. We would like very much to come and meet with members of the community. I hope that through our public meetings, visits with neighborhood groups and online communications that we will make it as convenient as possible for members of the community

Kick-Off Meeting November 2013



Kick-Off Meetings: Issues

- mobility, access, and circulation
- public space, particularly green space
- connectivity
- small business
- affordable housing
- impacts of new development
- attracting younger residents



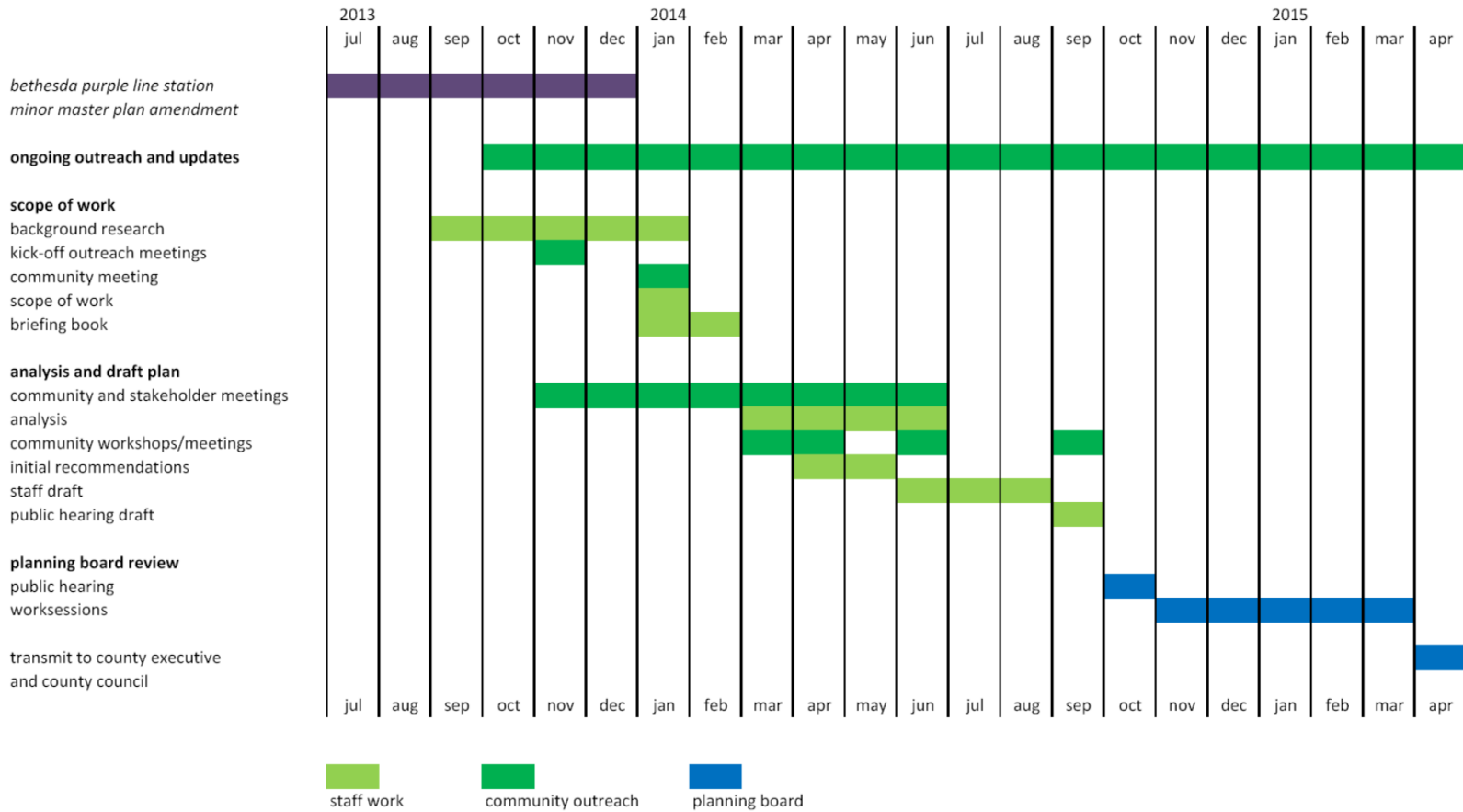
Consultants

- outreach support
- retail planning study



Schedule

Bethesda Downtown Plan proposed schedule



Bethesda Downtown Plan Scope of Work

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