



June 5, 2014

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Assoc. AIA, LEED-AP
Planner Coordinator, Area One
Montgomery County Planning Department
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: Bethesda Downtown Plan

Dear Mr. Hisel-McCoy:

As the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District (the "Bethesda A&E District"), I am pleased to present the attached recommendations for Planning Staff to consider in the formation of recommendations for the Bethesda Downtown Plan.

As background, the State of Maryland first designated downtown Bethesda as the Bethesda A&E District on July 1, 2002, and made a re-designation in 2012. The Bethesda A&E District is run by the Bethesda A&E District, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership ("BUP") who works with the Board of Directors and advisory committees of artists and art business representatives to improve upon the arts representation and initiatives in downtown Bethesda and present ideas for future artistic endeavors.

The Maryland Department of Economic Development awarded the Bethesda A&E District with an Outstanding Achievement Award in 2012. Officials from the Maryland State Arts Council have recognized the success of the Bethesda A&E to entice its sizeable downtown workforce to "stay and play" in the area after work and capitalize on the unique cultural and economic landscape of the area. The latest initiatives of the Bethesda A&E include the Tunnel Vision Project, Gallery B, Studio B, and the Bethesda Film Festival.


The importance of creating and enhancing the Bethesda A&E District was recognized in the 1994 Bethesda CBD Sector Plan and the 2006 Woodmont Triangle Amendment, and we are hopeful that Planning Staff will continue to support the Bethesda A&E District in its recommendations for the Bethesda Downtown Plan. Similar to the formation of the Bethesda A&E District and specific facilities such as Round House Theatre and the Studio B art studio space that were recommended in previous Sector Plans for Bethesda, the attached list includes recommendations for general and specific arts and entertainment improvements (the "what")

The Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District is managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.

and some tools to implement the recommendation and encourage improvements in the Bethesda A&E District (the “how”). We have also attached images to reflect some of the ongoing and potential Bethesda A&E initiatives and priorities.

Thank you for your consideration of the recommendations of the Bethesda A&E District.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Morenoff', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jerry Morenoff

Enclosures

cc: Robert Kronenberg, Chief, Area One, Montgomery County Planning Department
Andy O'Hare, Chair, Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.
Dave Dabney, Executive Director, Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.
Stephanie Coppula, Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.

Bethesda A&E Recommendations for Bethesda Downtown Plan

The Bethesda Downtown Plan should support all public and private sector arts and entertainment forms (film, visual arts, theatre, dance, music, literature/poetry) and venues within the A&E District to appeal to diverse audiences and help stimulate economic development.

What: Support the priorities of the A&E District as identified (and updated) by the A&E Board, such as:

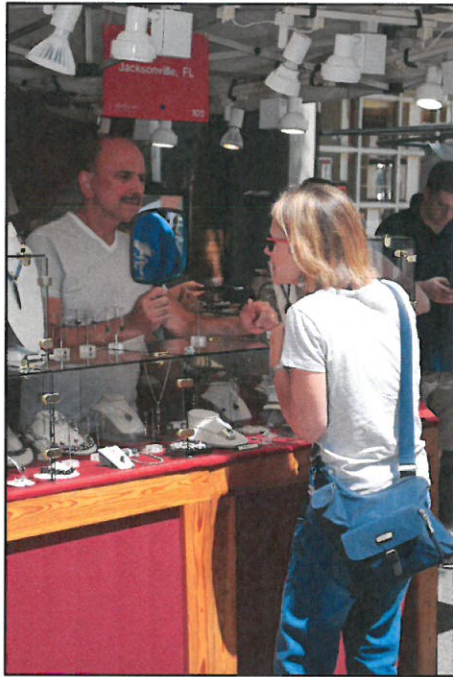
1. The Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) and its management of the A&E District, promotion of arts initiatives, and its collaboration with the private sector to create cultural events and exciting festivals for the community.
2. A flexible community theatre/stage space (known as a “black box”) of approximately 5,000sf (can be below grade- with street entrance) with potential for 200-250 seats. Identify as a “major public facility” resource for CR zone if nonprofit and/or public owned/managed facility.
3. Incorporate potential arts facility or improvements to public/private redevelopment, such as parking lots and garages (identify as a “major public facility” resource for CR zone).
4. A&E District wide branding –such as flags, signage, pavement markings - to identify the district and highlight arts and entertainment locations.
5. Improvements to existing infrastructure and public facilities–arts to improve blank walls and buildings.
6. Improvements to existing public spaces and arts amenities consistent with priorities of A&E District, including potential arts installations (which may be temporary).

How: Tools to implement and encourage the Arts and Entertainment–

1. Adequate budget for BUP to sustain its management role with the A&E District and its promotion of Arts and Entertainment activities and events in the A&E District.
2. Walkability in A&E District –provide streetscape improvements and allow flexibility for arts within pavement and public right-of-way (facilitate process and acceptance of maintenance agreements).
3. Recommend A&E tax credits for more than just creation of new arts studio space and include all publicly accessible arts and entertainment improvements.

4. Encourage developer and Planning Board consultation with BUP/A&E for public arts amenities for projects on priorities, feasible implementation, maintenance, etc.
5. Provide zoning incentives for facilitating arts improvements:
 - 1) In the CR zone, in an A&E District, allow for the A&E District Board to review and/or accept new public art improvements or payments, instead of Countywide Public Arts Trust Steering Committee. (Zoning Rewrite § 4.7.3.E.5).
 - 2) In the CR zone, in an A&E District, allow for more points (up to 20 instead of 15) for public art that is recommended in a Master Plan or by the A&E Board as a priority project, and allow for up to 25 points for provision of a recommended off-site public art or payment accepted by the A&E for an identified A&E priority (more points for payment since not in project).
 - 3) In the CR zone, in an A&E District, exclude the area of an on-site public arts facility or space (accepted by the A&E and/or identified as a priority A&E project in Master Plan or by A&E District Board) from the calculation of FAR, and allow for additional building height to accommodate such space. For an on-site public arts facility that is below grade, allow the project to add the area to the buildable FAR calculation.
 - 4) For CBD Optional Method project amendments to existing developments, encourage and support revitalization, replacement and/or relocation of existing public art and/or support a payment accepted by the A&E District for a public A&E initiative that is recommended in a Master Plan or by the A&E Board as a priority project.
 - 5) For CBD Optional Method project amendments to existing developments, support/continue to allow the exclusion of FAR of the area of an on-site public arts facility or space (accepted by the A&E and/or identified as a priority A&E project in Master Plan or by A&E District Board). For an on-site public arts facility that is below grade, allow the project to add the area to the buildable FAR calculation.
 - 6) Support the exclusion of any on-site public arts facility or space in and A&E District from the calculation of development impact taxes, transportation management district fees or similar taxes and fees.

**Bethesda Urban Partnership and
Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District-produced
Cultural Events, Festivals and Art Venues**



Flexible Community Theatre/Stage (Black Box Theatre)

Montgomery County has more than 200 local dance, choral and theatre companies that do not have a permanent performance space and would be suitable to rent a community theatre for weeknight and weekend performances available to the public.



Discussion with filmmakers after Bethesda Film Fest screening.

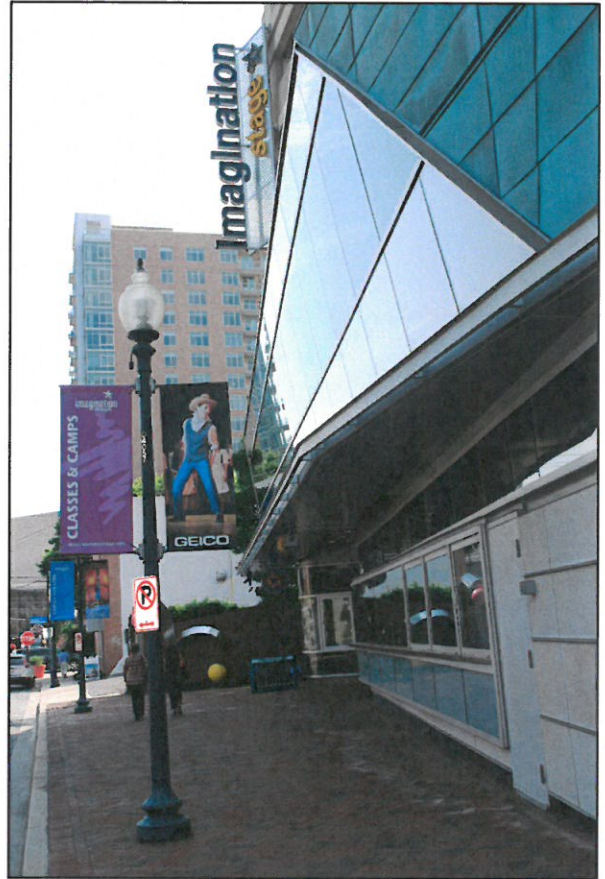


Play in a Day actors during rehearsal.

A&E District Branding



Model of a concept for Bethesda A&E branding.

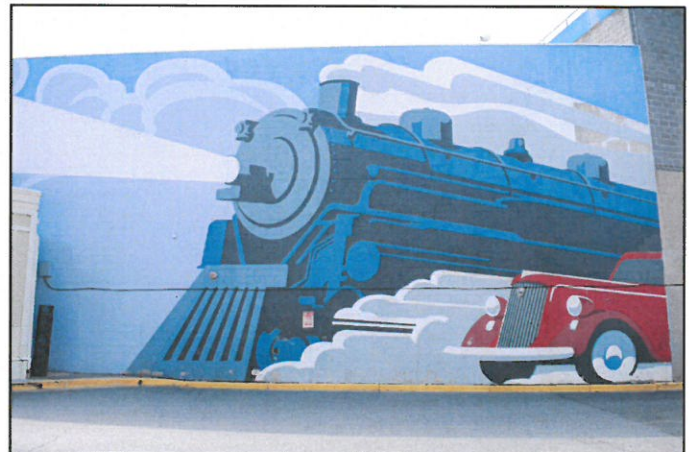


Street lights with banners provide additional branding opportunities for the Bethesda A&E District.

Public Art to Improve Blank Walls and Buildings



Trompe l'oeil painting at Pizzeria da Marco on Woodmont Avenue.



Outdoor mural at 4810 Bethesda Avenue.

Improvements to Existing Public Spaces and Arts Amenities



“Tunnel Vision” features the artwork of 12 regional artists in the Metro pedestrian that runs under Wisconsin Avenue.

Studio B



Studio B opened in January 2014 and features three studios where individual artists create their original artwork.