

Dan Reed
Silver Spring, MD

February 23, 2020

RE: Bill 3-21, Silver Spring Business Improvement District

Dear Council President Hucker and members of the County Council:

My name is Dan Reed and since 1991, I've been a part of the downtown Silver Spring in many different ways. I grew up here, I have spent countless hours and dollars shopping and hanging out here, I owned a condo here. Today my partner and I both work for small businesses in downtown Silver Spring. I'm writing to express my support for the Silver Spring Business Improvement District with some reservations.

In my day job as an urban planner, I've had the pleasure to work with other business improvement districts, primarily in DC and Northern Virginia. At their best, a BID is a cheerleader for its community and a champion for positive change. Successful BIDs in our region run marketing campaigns, organize day-to-day events for locals (think Yoga in the Park) and big events that draw people from across the region (think Screen on the Green). Overall a good BID can create a place that local businesses and residents alike thrive in.

Silver Spring's urban district does a good job at these things but there is room for improvement. A lot of my friends moved here after school and will often spend their time and money elsewhere. It's not that they don't know what's here, it's that their friends don't know what's here and won't come. How many folks still think of Silver Spring as this boring suburb off the Red Line - if they think of it at all? That's changing slowly, but I can tell you firsthand how many *last* dates I've had in Silver Spring with boys who lived in DC and concluded this place wasn't worth the trip.

Downtown has such a remarkable story to tell. Historic architecture. Excellent food. Live music and theatre. A young, diverse population. A destination for beer lovers. A hub for the region's African diaspora. How can we tell this story? How can we leverage this to strengthen our community and our local economy? This is what a BID can do!

At the same time, I've heard concerns from local business owners, many of whom I count as friends. They want to know they will have a seat at the table, and that a handful of large property owners won't be the only voices. There is also a significant unhoused population in Silver Spring, and I would hate for the BID's response to be to sweep them under the rug.

The Downtown DC BID offers some helpful examples for how we could structure our BID: its board is composed of people from a variety of perspectives, including local

businesses, nonprofits, and even area schools. And it has homeless services as part of its charge, even providing a day center where people can access showers and meals.

I have been following the BID process for years and am tentatively excited about the possibilities if it happens. I hope this Council can shape it in a way that benefits everyone and allows Silver Spring to reach its full potential. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Dan Reed