

**Silver Spring
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
May 9, 2013**

2b

Abbreviations

DGS = Department of General Services
LEED = Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
MSHA = Maryland State Highway Administration
T&E = Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment
WMATA = Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Items 1 & 2 – Introductions/Chair’s Comments: Members and guests introduced themselves. Co-Chair **Samantha Mazo** thanked the Committee members for their input on an email to the County Council Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment (T&E) Committee regarding the proposed reduction in the Silver Spring Parking Lot District (PLD) tax rate. **Ms. Mazo** announced that the proposal was defeated.

Item 3 –Around the Room: Co-Chair **Andy Wexler** opened the floor to any issues and concerns of the Committee:

- **Molly King** said 245 out of 2400 residents at The Blairs responded to a bicycle interest survey, showing enthusiasm for greater investment in biking and biking infrastructure.
- **Phil Olivetti** explained that, as a stakeholder of the Georgia Avenue Redevelopment Committee, which oversees Georgia Avenue from Forest Glen to 16th Street, he hopes that interactions of the committee with the businesses in that area will help drive economic development to the downtown Silver Spring area. Updates will be provided and the next meeting will be within a month.
- **Mr. Wexler** commented on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) letter to Montgomery County regarding the Silver Spring Transit Center. The letter stated that WMATA would not take ownership of the center, even after repairs have been done. The Department of General Services (DGS) neglected to give notification of receipt of the letter at the April 17 meeting of Silver Spring advisory committee chairs.
- **Sgt. Tom Harmon** announced his retirement from the MC Police Department in June. Members thanked him for his years of service on the Committee.
- **Sgt Harmon** added that weather could impact the transit center repairs, and he discussed the planned removal of reversible lanes on Colesville Road.

Item 4 – The Blairs Master Plan: **Eric Posner**, The Tower Companies, presented The Blairs redevelopment plan.

The Tower Companies, located in Montgomery County since 1947, has created 4.5 million square feet of sustainable mixed use community environments consisting of offices, corporate parks, residencies, malls and hotels. A third of Tower properties are Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified; the remaining are in various stages of LEED certification. **Mr. Posner** said that three out of 11 of the properties are LEED Platinum certified. Blair Town Apartments was the first LEED certified in the country, and helped to develop the national LEED program.

Mr. Posner gave some details about The Blairs site:

- The Blairs comprises 27.5 acres and is located between Colesville and Blair Mill Roads.
- The entire property is owned by Tower with the exception the gas station on Colesville and the apartment building located at 1220 East West Highway.

- There are three high rise and four garden style apartments with town homes and a corporate building.

Mr. Posner discussed the architecture of the project. Tower hired Vancouver-based Bing Thom Architects as the master planner and Sasaki Associates to design the landscaping. The overall architectural goal is to redevelop The Blairs to complement peoples' commuting needs in traveling to the Metro and downtown Silver Spring. Other objectives regarding architecture:

- Create an integrated community that is easy to walk through to Metro and downtown Silver Spring by providing various size public and walking spaces.
- Pay greater attention to how the boundaries of the property are treated, creating "activated edges" with residential or commercial spaces, contributing to an urban fabric.
- Making parking largely invisible by providing underground or interior parking, which are either platforms wrapped by buildings or on rooftops – all structures have independent hidden parking.
- Integrating new buildings with the existing buildings, built circa 1960.
- Using phased construction to have less of an impact on residents and the greater community.

Mr. Posner described the land use layout of the 10 new buildings that will be integrated with the existing structures. Draper Lane will be extended through the development from Colesville Road to Blair Mill Road, bifurcating the site into upper and lower escarpments.

- The upper escarpment contains a commercial zone with office buildings and grocery store.
- The lower escarpment is a residential area, away from commercial activity.

Shorter residential buildings at the south end of the property are more in tune with the lower heights of homes across Eastern Avenue in the District, minimizing the scale.

The demolition phase of the project will start with the Blair Towers, four buildings with 270 units. Moving assistance has been provided to relocate residents, who will be allowed to finish or break their leases. All four buildings will be brought down at once. The commercial/retail buildings cannot be redeveloped until their 10-year leases have expired.

The landscaping plan for the 27 acres will be programmed around the various parks providing direct walking/biking paths through retail areas to Metro, and by creating a network with the existing paths.

There will be only one new connection added from surrounding streets. All parking and loading entrances are located inside the site to prevent traffic backups.

Mr. Posner described the various parks and functions:

- Blair Park (largest park) has a wide streetscape, separating pedestrians and retailers, a loop roadway for traffic, and can be programmed for events and street fairs.
- Terrace Park has a cascading water feature, stairs and a gently sloping walkway smoothing out a 30 foot grade difference.
- Montgomery Square, a large play area with shelter/shaded areas.
- Postmaster Park, a less programmed, quiet park
- Portal Park, a dog park.
- Fitness parks.

Five of 27 acres are programmed for open space parks, and there will also be various green roofs containing pools and other amenities.

The phasing of demolition will start in the late spring/summer of 2014, with construction starting in the fall. Each phase will take 24-30 months to complete with a total expected time frame of 15 years. **Mr. Posner**

said the goal is to keep the Giant grocery store operating during most of the remodeling; however, the entrance on East West highway will not be moved until construction is complete. The new entrance will be moved to a different location on East West Highway, so delivery trucks no longer share the entrance with other traffic.

Ed Murn explained that the entrance way will not be relocated until after construction, because the overall layout will not change much during the remodeling. To date, Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) has not provided permission for a median break on Colesville Road to provide access to Draper Lane through the community. Draper Lane would create another access way, which will reduce congestion at the East West/Colesville Road intersection.

Other points of discussion were:

- How the usage of over/under pedestrian walkways works against urban design and people-activated streetscapes, which have the goal of keep pedestrians at street level.
- The need to change the dominant MSHA view from simply moving traffic and vehicles to pedestrian friendly walkable neighborhoods.
- How parking is currently below County requirements due to the transit oriented behavior of the residents; however, to attract commercial/retail interests, ample parking must be available.
- The increased demand in biking and how it is being integrated into the community's new design that incorporates cargo bikes and a commitment to bike sharing.

The Committee has until July to submit letters of support for the Preliminary and Project Site Plan applications currently up for review. The review process should be done by September, with construction starting next summer.

Item 5 – Committee Email to Council re: PLD Rates:

VOTE: The Committee voted to retroactively approve the email to the Council T&E Committee.

Item 6 –Updates:

- County Contract with Alta Bicycle Share has been finalized.
- Bike to Work Day – May 17, 6:30-9 am
- Work is continuing on the Walk & Ride website

The Committee further discussed issues of bikeshare safety. **Ms. Brecher** said that the MC Dept. of Transportation is developing a plan for bike infrastructure which also addresses safety and educational outreach.

The Committee thanked **Sgt. Tom Harmon** for his service.

Adjourned

Next meeting date: June 13, 2013

**Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee Attendance Sheet
May 9, 2013**

Voting Members (12)			
Name	Affiliation	Present	Absent
Chamber Members (3)			
Arnetta Haines	Social and Scientific Systems	X	
Michael Meszaros	Digital Industry, Inc.	X	
Samantha Mazo / Co-chair	Linowes and Blocher LLP	X	
Citizens Advisory Board Members (3)			
Jim Bunch	Kemp Mill, Four Corners, East SS		X
Phil Olivetti	North & West Sector Plan Area	X	
Andrew Wexler / Co-chair	CBD Resident	X	
Employers less than 50 employees (3)			
Vacant			
Everton Latty	iDeal Decisions, Inc.	X	
Valerie Spencer	MayaTech	X	
Employers with 50 or more employees (3)			
G. Michael Price	Discovery Communications	X	
Molly King	The Blairs	X	
Vacant			
Non-Voting Members (3)			
Sandra Brecher, DOT Transit Services	DOT Director or Designee	X	
Vacant			
Reemberto Rodriguez	Silver Spring Regional Center	X	
Sergeant Thomas Harmon	Montgomery County Police	X	
Staff			
Nakengi Byrd	DOT, Commuter Services	X	
Jim Carlson	DOT, Commuter Services	X	
Guests			
William Kominers	Lerch Early & Brewer	X	
Ed Murn	WRIT	X	
Eric Posner	The Tower Companies	X	