

# SILVER SPRING REGIONAL AREA

Monthly Report    MAY 2016    *Reemberto Rodriguez, Director*

## [1] COMMUNITY ISSUES

### (a) Fenton Village Focus:

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual “Taste the World in Fenton Village” is set for Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>.

- This is one of four – and the smallest – of the events produced, paid for in large part by, and supported through the Silver Spring Urban District. (The others are the Jazz Festival, the Thanksgiving Parade, and a Summer Concert Series.) The TTWV has grown this year to 30 restaurants. This ‘restaurant crawl’ has been instrumental in the continuing success of this area of downtown Silver Spring – and the growing success of the Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment District. Accompanying this success is:
  - The evolution of the **Fenton Street Market** (now under new local ownership and doing pop ups throughout downtown and elsewhere);
  - The recent affirmation of the Area’s best through the “**The Best of Fenton Village**”;
  - The upcoming “**Discover Bonifant**” event Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, celebrating the nearly 20 diverse and locally owned businesses on this street; and,
  - The newly formed **Fenton Village, Inc.**, a non-profit dedicated to working with merchants, owners, and area residents to ensure the continued vitality of the uniqueness of Fenton Village.

### (b) Transportation Issues

Many of the community issues in Silver Spring relate to transportation – transit, vehicular, bicycles, and pedestrians. We are working closely with the different agencies (various MCDOT divisions, DPS, SHA, MTA, WMATA, DC gov’t, Park & Planning and others) on these issues, helping ensure community connections for input and advice:

- The **Purple Line** will begin construction early next year if not sooner. The State (MTA) has already sent out letters to the prospective members of the Community Advisory Teams that will be part of the input and advice structure during the critical construction phase of the project. We continue working with specific groups (i.e.: the Wayne Avenue Group) for details of certain station areas.
- The **Bus Rapid Transit** Community Advisory Committee for US29S will be reconvening later in May to continue providing advice within the context of the new focus to build this segment of the BRT “within the gutters.”
- The Georgia Avenue Stakeholders Group (providing advice regarding to the State’s SHA regarding **Georgia Avenue from 16<sup>th</sup> St. to the Beltway**) awaits hearing back from SHA regarding the ‘preferred alternative’ for that project.
- The **Takoma Langley Bus Station** will open later in the summer or early Fall. This Station – though in Prince George’s County – will substantially restructure bus operations (including Ride On) in the area, alleviating the need for on-street stops in this highly trafficked intersection.
- The **Silver Spring Transit Station** – now opened for months – is working well. Tweaks continue to be made to the operations, as well as surrounding area where there remains work to be done on certain sidewalks and streets. Park & Planning is working with WMATA to bring temporary and transitional pop up uses to the large green space adjacent to the station before it becomes a staging area for the Purple Line - and eventually a redeveloped site.
- **New bike lanes** on Spring Street will be constructed in the near future. These lanes are part of the highly successful BiPPA project that MCDOT is implementing with the direct participation and advice of the Silver Spring community. Other improvements include the installation of bike racks that are both functional and decorative (with the Silver Spring logo.)
- Under the leadership of Councilmember Tom Hucker, there is a renewed interest in moving forward with fixing some of the most immediate issues at the **16<sup>th</sup> Street Circle** as we continue planning for more permanent solutions.

### **(c) Homelessness downtown**

There is a spike in the apparent number of homeless in downtown Silver Spring. This is a complex issue. We are committed to addressing it empathetically and in collaboration with the many organizations and agencies that work with this special population. We convened a meeting of most major stakeholders recently and will continue exploring 'best practices' and approaches to this situation. While there is no single solution that will 'solve' the problem, we are considering various measures to alleviate the situation. (i.e.: Enhanced policing of criminal activity; support through established substance abuse programs; continuing education of operators of major area venues regarding this special population; increased communication among the many downtown stakeholders; and, investigating the possibility of not diminishing capacity of the upcounty shelter during the summer.)

## **[2] ADVISORY GROUP ACTIVITIES**

### **(a) Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (Monday, May 9)**

In April, the SSCAB had a very successful convening with 15 area non-profits who were invited to share with the Board and each other – and do some traditional networking. In May, the SSCAB is looking to do a special gathering focusing on the history of Silver Spring to better understand today's issues. (They will also consider draft by-laws revisions.)

Each of the three SSCAB Committees are focusing on different topics. The Commercial and Economic Development Committee continues its dialogues regarding work force development, and particularly youth employment opportunities; the Transportation, Environment and Energy Committee has been instrumental in the BiPPA effort to make downtown more bicycle and pedestrian friendly; and the Neighborhoods Committee will be holding a forum with School Board members at their next meeting, Monday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **(b) Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee (Thursday, May 19)**

In April, the Parks Department presented the status of various park projects in downtown. In May, the Takoma Park / Silver Spring Montgomery College Provost, Brad Stewart, will present the school's long range plans to the Committee.

### **(c) Silver Spring Transportation Management Advisory Committee (Thursday, May 12)**

In April the TMD heard from Park & Planning regarding the Bike Master Plan for the County, with emphasis on Silver Spring. The agenda for May is under development.

### **(d) Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee (Next meeting in June, TBA)**

The Committee met in April to tour the B&O Railroad Station in their continuing effort to meet at the different art locations throughout Silver Spring. They also discussed the spring/summer plans for each of the Committee member's venues. (These include The Fillmore, the Black Box, AFI, Downtown SS, the College, and others.) In June the Committee will host Councilmember Tom Hucker.