

# SILVER SPRING REGIONAL AREA

Monthly Report      SEPTEMBER 2016      *Reemberto Rodriguez, Director*

## [1] COMMUNITY ISSUES

### **Long Branch Fire**

The August 10<sup>th</sup> explosion that caused a major fire in an apartment complex in Long Branch remains a major issue in Silver Spring. Seven lives were lost. Twenty-six apartments were destroyed. Fifty five households were displaced... Beyond the jarring numbers, the community is traumatized by this disastrous event... The response to this disaster has been truly exemplary. Neighbors from near and far – including many businesses - contributed over half a million dollars for the families that lost everything; non-profits and the faith community stepped up and created a network of support not only for the immediate neighbors, but the larger community as well; County agencies remain engaged offering social services and much more... Now the challenge ahead is addressing the issue of sustainability and support 'for the long haul'. We continue coordinating and collaborating with multiple agencies and institutions that are similarly committed to Long Branch.

### **Pending Closure of County Operations of Fenton Village Parking Lot #3**

As of September 30<sup>th</sup>, Fenton Village Parking Lot #3 will no longer be operated by the County. At that time, approximately half the parking spaces will be permanently unavailable; the rest will be available to the public under private management. This is happening as part of the development of Studio Plaza, a 399 apartment (and some retail) project. Included in the project is a new underground County parking garage with approximately 150 parking spaces. We have been working diligently with the area merchants, the Parking Lot District, and the developers to mitigate the challenges posed by this reduction in parking spaces over the two years it will take to develop the garage. Additional issues being addressed include ensuring continuation of business during the temporary closure of Mayor's Lane; facilitating trash service for the relocated dumpsters; coordinating with utilities to minimize disruption; and dealing with a rat infestation problem.

### **Community Celebrations**

In September alone, Veterans Plaza will host festivals every weekend, including the premier, highest attended event of the year, the Silver Spring Jazz Festival. Additionally, coming after a very successful August (which ended with a Bachata Festival), September started with Fox5DC televising live from various venues downtown, providing four hours of essentially free t.v. marketing. The month continues with the likes of a Gospel Festival, the Ethiopian Festival, Hispanic Month Celebration, a Dance Festival, the PanaFest Celebration, and the Maker Faire... Takoma Park will host the Takoma Folk, a BeerFest, and (in early October) its famous Takoma Park Street Festival... And, this year the Silver Spring / Takoma Park Restaurant Week has the participation of over 35 restaurants... This level of activity – plus the countless galas and other 'routine' events at venues such as The Fillmore and the College's Art Center – continue sparking economic activity, growing the nighttime economy, affirming the vibrancy and vitality of Silver Spring. However, the increasing activity also requires increased support from the Urban District, Police, and other agencies.

## **[2] ADVISORY GROUPS**

### **Citizens Advisory Board**

The SSCAB will begin its new year of meetings with a dialogue on the Master Planning process. At its full board meeting Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, they will convene a panel to discuss the process in general and identify Silver Spring specific issues. Then, at its regularly scheduled Committee meeting night (Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup>) they will reconvene to dialogue about these identified issues on more detail.

We have received over 125 applicants to vacancies on the SSCAB. This is simply an unprecedented response! Approximately 20 applicants best matching the Board's stated preferences will be interviewed in October. Names will be recommended to the County Executive in November. And, County Council will vote on their approval in December. Therefore, we hope to have a full board seated by the New Year, if not shortly thereafter.

### **Urban District Advisory Committee**

The SSUDAC has invited the Silver Spring Transportation Management District (SSTMD) to host a joint meeting of the two Advisory Groups Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 p.m. in the Civic Building. The agenda will be to dialogue with the Maryland Transportation Authority (MTA) and the County's Department of Transportation regarding how the Purple Line intersects with the two downtown stations (Transit Center and Library.)

### **Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee**

The SSA&EAC will reconvene in October.