



June 23, 2020

The Honorable Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Elrich:

On behalf of the members of the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee, I am writing to request additional funding for three items in the FY21 budget.

Even before we faced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we warned that Silver Spring was at a tipping point. Our budget for basic services had simply not kept up with the huge population growth over the past ten years. As our economy begins to open, it is more critical than ever that the Silver Spring Urban District has the necessary resources to keep our community clean, safe, livable, and attractive. . .for residents and businesses that are deciding whether to remain here, for workers deciding to rejoin the urban office environment, and for businesses that might consider locating here.

We are therefore requesting a supplemental appropriation to assure that the Silver Spring Urban District can cover these three items:

- 1) **24/7 Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)** – As you are well aware from our previous correspondence, Silver Spring has seen dramatic growth in the number of homeless and other vulnerable individuals in our community. Especially of concern is the increase in the number of individuals who have mental health and/or substance abuse issues and the inability of our County social service providers to get them into the programs they need. This was a challenge pre-COVID-19. It has gotten worse in the past few months.

We are pleased that a part-time crisis response case worker has been assigned to Silver Spring and is working out of the Urban District offices. And we are pleased to hear that one “full-time” caseworker will be hired to provide assistance weekdays. However, the limited presence of only one caseworker is not enough. We are requesting two additional case workers who can provide quick response to calls from businesses, residents, and police and address problems when they occur, whether during business hours, late at night, or in the wee hours of the morning. Only with additional staff will we have the coverage necessary to address the challenges our patrons, and residents face and to deliver the appropriate services to those who need to be brought in off the streets.

Providing funding for a 24/7 Silver Spring CIT will not only address these challenges, but it fits with the many recommendations to reallocate certain duties to those in government best equipped to handle them. Currently, when a situation arises with an individual experiencing a mental health crisis, or one whose disruptive behavior is disturbing the quality of life for others, police are called. If business owners and residents knew that a crisis intervention expert were available to intervene, the individual could more quickly be directed to the services the County provides.

- 2) **Sidewalk Repair/Replacement** – Among the goals for the County’s Vision Zero initiative are making sure that our streets are safe for walking, biking, and using a wheelchair or scooter. Assuring that Silver Spring’s

sidewalks are in good repair, free of trip hazards and other perils will assure that they help to meet the Vision Zero goals. As such, the multi-year sidewalk repair project begun last year must continue. This is a long-term project to restore sidewalk conditions that have deteriorated due to deferred maintenance. The Urban District crew has identified some 400 additional areas that need repairs. They need the supplies necessary to continue addressing these broken sidewalks, the qualified staff to properly lay the bricks (required by the Silver Spring streetscape standards) and maintain the sidewalks once these repairs are done.

- 3) **Streetscape Maintenance** – As our businesses begin to reopen, our population continues to grow, and, hopefully, as we welcome potential businesses and investors to consider moving into Inventa Towers, the former Discovery Building, presenting a “Clean and Safe” community will become even more critical. The Urban District needs the resources to continue and enhance the year-round landscaping and plantings that enhance the appearance of our community and replace the many dead or ailing trees in the Central Business District.

As we make this request for the Urban District budget, we must note the critical role the Silver Spring Parking Lot District (PLD) plays in funding the Urban District. We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the revenues expected for the PLD. That’s why it is even more important that no dollars from Silver Spring be reallocated to fund other parking districts, specifically Bethesda, as had been suggested previously.

Providing the needed financial support to keep our Urban District, clean, safe, and welcoming will serve to bring patrons back. That will benefit the PLD in the long run because the more people who come to Silver Spring, the more parking that will be utilized, bringing back the fee revenues. Cutting the Urban District budget so that it is not able to provide the necessary services will only serve to further diminish the success of the Parking Lot District.

In making these requests, we ask that you please do not diminish the Urban District’s ability to keep Silver Spring attractive, comfortable, “clean and safe.” Revenue shortfalls bring the temptation to constrain budget and effort, but businesses, investors, and residents will be looking at Silver Spring more than ever this year. What they see will influence their decisions and the County’s revenue picture for years to come.

Sincerely,



Diana Brown, Chair
Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee

cc: Reemberto Rodriguez