

**Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan, Implementation Advisory Committee Appointments**

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Leslye Howerton, Supervisor, DownCounty Planning, [leslye.howerton@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:leslye.howerton@montgomeryplanning.org), 301.495.4566Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, DownCounty Planning, [Elza.Hisel-McCoy@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Elza.Hisel-McCoy@montgomeryplanning.org), 301.495.2115**Completed: 12.09.20**

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Reappoint six members of the Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) to new terms for the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan.

**BACKGROUND**

As outlined in the *Approved and Adopted Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan*, in 2017 the Planning Department created a representative and balanced Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) to coordinate and monitor the progress of development and address implementation of the recommendations in the *Approved and Adopted Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan*. The IAC is made up of representatives from the business community and residents of downtown Bethesda. The Planning Board appointed the 14-member committee in December 2017.

As of December 2020, six members' terms are set to expire. On November 6, 2019, Staff sent letters requesting nominations to participate in the Implementation Advisory Committee for the member terms that expire this December. Letters were sent out to various property/business owners and community groups soliciting nominations, including but not limited to the Coalition of Bethesda Area Residents (CBAR), the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, the Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP), the Town of Chevy Chase, East Bethesda Civic Association, Edgemoor Citizens Association, Battery Park Citizens Association, the Sacks Neighborhood, Chevy Chase West Neighborhood and various individual condominium associations within Downtown Bethesda.

**METHOD OF SELECTION**

Members must be appointed by the Planning Board and will serve three-year terms. Members are eligible for reappointment upon completion of their term. Members may serve two full consecutive terms.

Members are selected by representatives from the Planning Department, Bethesda Urban Partnership, Bethesda Regional Services Center, and Bethesda Green as outlined in the Rules of Procedure. Nine individuals expressed interest and submitted letters, including six current IAC members seeking reappointment. The selection committee and planning staff are recommending that the Planning Board reappoint the six current IAC members to new three-year terms.

## PROFILE OF RECOMMENDED COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following provides a brief profile of each recommended member. Letters of Interest are attached.

### **Property Owner /Business Owner Representatives**

1. **Emily Vaias, President, Ballard Spahr, LLP (current IAC member seeking reappointment)** 2019-2020 Co-chair of the IAC
2. **Jad Donohoe, Senior Vice President, The Donohoe Companies (current IAC member seeking reappointment)** former chair of the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board, former member of the Woodmont Triangle Advisory Group, current member of the NAIOP Leadership Committee, and current treasurer of the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment Committee.
3. **Patrick O'Neil, Attorney, Lerch Early and Brewer (current IAC member seeking reappointment)** former chair of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce and the Bethesda Urban Partnership

### **Civic Associations/Homeowners/Condo Associations**

1. **Naomi Spinrad, resident of Chevy Chase West neighborhood (current IAC member seeking reappointment)** 2019-2020 Co-chair of the IAC
2. **Susan Wegner, resident representing the Lauren Condominium (current IAC member seeking reappointment)** appointed in 2019 to fill IAC resident seat that was vacated prior to term ending
3. **Michael Fetchko, representing residents of Battery Lane District and Whitehall Condominium (current IAC member seeking reappointment)** appointed in 2018 to fill IAC resident seat that was vacated prior to term ending

## OTHER APPLICANTS

The following is a list of other applicants considered:

1. Andrew T. O'Hare, resident and current East Bethesda Citizens Association President
2. James Boomgard, resident of Bethesda since August of 2005 and currently the President and CEO of DAI Global, LLC an international development company with its global headquarters in Bethesda since 1999.
3. Todd Taskey, resident of Bethesda since 2011 and of Montgomery County for 30 years

## ATTACHMENT

- A. Implementation Advisory Committee Letters of Interest

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12th Floor  
Washington, DC 20006-1157  
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Emily J. Vaias  
Tel: 202.661.2239  
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vaiaese@ballardspahr.com

November 20, 2020

*Via E-mail*

Leslye Howerton  
Master Planner Supervisor  
Mont County Planning Department  
2425 Reedie Drive  
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Reappointment to Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee

Dear Ms. Howerton:

This letter serves as my letter of interest regarding reappointment to the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (the "IAC") for a three-year term. I was originally appointed to the IAC in 2017, with work beginning in 2018, and have served as Co-Chair for 2019 and 2020, representing the business community. I am a land use lawyer, with an urban planning background, practicing in Montgomery County, and am a resident of the nearby Kensington community.

As you are aware, the role of the IAC is to monitor development in Bethesda and provide the Planning Board and other agencies with guidance and recommendations related to implementation of the Bethesda Downtown Plan. As Co-Chair, I have helped prepare the Rules of Procedure for the group, and identified issues and speakers for our monthly meetings. As a group, we have looked at individual projects and provided comments on them as well as on larger policy documents such as the Design Guidelines and Streetscape Standards. We discuss practical issues such as sidewalk obstructions during construction and drop-off/pick-up areas. These everyday functional operations are a large part of what makes and will make Bethesda a successful community into the future.

I enjoy being a part of the IAC and would be happy to be reappointed to continue our good work. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Emily J. Vaias

# DONOHUE

*Integrity and Vision Since 1884*

November 20, 2020

Ms. Leslye Howerton  
Master Planning Supervisor  
Montgomery County Planning Department  
*Via email*

Dear Ms. Howerton:

Please accept this letter expressing my interest in serving another three-year term on the Bethesda Implementation Advisory Committee, or IAC. I have enjoyed my role as a business member of the board, and as a senior vice president of a company active in Montgomery County real estate I hope that I have brought my knowledge of the business side of development and the “art of the possible” to the IAC.

I am pleased to have served in a variety of volunteer roles in Montgomery County over the last fifteen years and to carry the resulting institutional memory, including former chair of the IAC, former chair of the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board, former member of the Woodmont Triangle Advisory Group, current member of the NAIOP Leadership Committee, and current treasurer of the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment Committee. I look forward to the possibility of continuing to serve on the IAC.

Sincerely,



James A. “JAD” Donohoe, IV  
Senior Vice President  
THE DONOHUE COMPANIES, INC.

7101 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 700  
Bethesda, MD 20814

202.333.0880

**DONOHUE.COM**

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**Patrick L. O'Neil**  
*Attorney*  
301-657-0738  
[ploneil@lercheearly.com](mailto:ploneil@lercheearly.com)

November 20, 2020

**Via E-mail Communication**

Ms. Leslye Howerton  
Master Planner Supervisor  
Montgomery County Planning Department  
2425 Reedie Drive  
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Reappointment to Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee

Dear Ms. Howerton:

Please accept this letter as my expression of interest in being reappointed to the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (the "IAC") for a three-year term. I was appointed to the formational IAC in 2017 as a business representative recommended by the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce and am interested in continuing the Committee's productive work.

I am a land use and zoning attorney with Lerch, Early & Brewer, located in Bethesda, Maryland, and am very interested in the successful growth of Bethesda over the next twenty years of my career. As the former chair of both the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce and the Bethesda Urban Partnership, I know how important it is to work with a wide variety of partners to ensure that Bethesda remains an attractive destination for businesses, residents and visitors. I was also involved in the Bethesda Downtown Plan approval process and value the role of the IAC to monitor development in Bethesda and provide relevant guidance to the Planning Board and other agencies on the Implementation of the Plan.

I have enjoyed the work of the IAC and hope that I will be able to contribute to it. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Patrick L. O'Neil

**From:** [Naomi Spinrad](#)  
**To:** [Howerton, Leslye](#)  
**Subject:** Reappointment to Bethesda IAC  
**Date:** Monday, November 9, 2020 10:10:10 PM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Leslye,

I'm writing to request reappointment as a residential member of the Bethesda Implementation Advisory Committee.

As you know,, I'm a resident of Chevy Chase West, adjacent to the South Bethesda area of the Bethesda Downtown Plan. I've been on the IAC for three years, the last two as residential co-chair. In that role, in coordination with the commercial co-chair, I've worked on an update of the Rules of Procedure that I believe will foster collegial problem solving among IAC members, and planned IAC meetings to include presentations of development projects as well as issue-oriented briefings and discussions. With the challenges of Covid-19 now facing us, it's important that the IAC and its members continue to focus on the best ways to keep Bethesda resilient, vibrant, and attractive to current and prospective residents, businesses, workers, and the various organizations that contribute to life here.

My familiarity with Bethesda extends to my involvement as the Plan was created starting in 2014, and as a resident of the BCC area since 1993.

This request has the support of my civic association, the Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association. If there is any additional information you need, please let me know.

Thank you for considering me yet again for the IAC.

Best regards,  
Naomi Spinrad

Mrs Leslye Howerton  
Master Planning Supervisor  
Montgomery County Planning Department  
2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902

Leslye:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a letter to request reappointment to the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC). As an owner in the 300 unit Whitehall Condominium Association on Battery Lane for over six years and a tenant on Battery Lane for more than 15 years before that, I am keenly interested in confirming that the BDP will maintain and improve Bethesda generally and the Battery Lane District specifically as an smartly-developed, pedestrian- and bicyclist-friendly, lively urban area with adequate and well-maintained parks and greenspace among well-designed, mixed-use buildings.

Since taking over an open IAC seat in September 2018, I've attended all of our monthly meetings to learn about upcoming projects across the BDP area, paying special attention to locations such as 8240 Wisconsin Ave, 8011 Old Georgetown Road, 8025 Norfolk Avenue, 4915 Auburn Avenue, and the entire Aldon/Brown Battery Lane redevelopment as they affect my Battery Lane District neighborhood. I take seriously the need for both Bethesda resident input on the development projects and resident/developer dialog about potential differences in priorities of such projects as viewed through the BDP implementation recommendations. I believe the discussion and recent approval of our Rules of Procedure will benefit the discussion at our meetings.

In addition, I have stayed current with new development submissions outside of IAC meetings through developer's public meetings, DAP meetings, and Planning Board meetings. I've also followed and/or attended meetings for development-related issues, such as the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans (including Vision Zero), Thrive Montgomery 2050, and the new dog park proposed for Norwood Park.

As I did two years ago when first approved by the Planning Board, I believe that I am an attentive and passionate representative voice of the Battery Lane District on the IAC. Also, as the current Secretary of Whitehall's Board of Directors, I can communicate quickly with my fellow owners both to provide and to solicit information about the effects of the BDP on our property. Finally, the Aldon/Brown redevelopment proposal has provided an opportunity for me and representatives of the other Battery Lane condominiums' homeowners to meet to discuss issues that directly impact our neighborhood, giving me even more input from my neighbors.

While I do not have development or planning training or expertise, I believe that my 20+ years of living on Battery Lane, enjoying all of Bethesda as my home, and working at NIH provide me an insightful view of how the BDP can and should affect the lives of those who also live and/or work in Bethesda.

Thank you for this opportunity. I hope that you will continue to find me an asset to the IAC and therefore request your recommendation to the Planning Board to be re-appointed to the IAC.

Sincerely,

Michael Fetchko

Bethesda MD 20184

**From:** [Susan Wegner](#)  
**To:** [Howerton, Leslye](#)  
**Subject:** Re: IAC terms expiring  
**Date:** Thursday, October 22, 2020 1:30:36 PM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Hi Leslye,

Per your instructions below, please find below my letter of interest. I assume this is somewhat in advance of when you will ask for these, but I wanted to get it off my to do list.

Given that I was filling a term that was not completed, coupled with the strange and challenging year due to Covid, I would love the opportunity to be reappointed and extend my involvement on the BDIAC. As a current resident of downtown Bethesda, I am enthusiastic about the continued chance to assist in implementing the *Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan*. Particularly with the monumental challenges that lie ahead to areas like Bethesda as a result of the pandemic, I am incredibly motivated to be part of the advisory committee.

I bring a unique combination of qualities perfectly suited to the position. Foremost, I have been a Bethesda resident for almost 20 years – but, uniquely, I have had the pleasure of living and raising my children in a more suburban Bethesda setting, and now, as an empty nester, living in the heart of downtown Bethesda. This situation provides me with significant insight into the importance of developing downtown Bethesda in a purposeful and thoughtful manner, while bearing in mind that Bethesda is more than just downtown, and must serve those who live in the nearby neighborhoods.

I am an environmental and land use attorney who is involved, on a daily basis, with implementing and advising various constituencies on development projects and sustainable approaches to building for the future. My practice provides transactional advice on new building projects, urban design, and how to integrate the needs of residents, business owners, and civic leaders, while focusing on issues related to transportation and population density. I also have professional experience with renewable energy consulting and working with business leaders to ensure that projects consider the future impacts of current development.

Finally, I have experience serving on an Environmental Planning Commission at a time when a community was in full-growth mode. That community, Mountain View, California, was then similarly situated to Bethesda now, and being involved in the massive development projects there in the mid-late 1990s provides me with significant and useful proficiency to serve Bethesda today. I look forward to speaking to you and can provide my resume if you'd like.

Cheers,  
Susan ツ

On Oct 21, 2020, at 3:30 PM, Howerton, Leslye  
<[leslye.howerton@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:leslye.howerton@montgomeryplanning.org)> wrote:

Hi Susan,  
I believe for the reappointments last year, we requested the members submit a letter of interest. You can also submit they you were filling a term that was not completed.

Thanks

Leslye Howerton  
Master Planning Supervisor, Downcounty Planning Division



8002 Kentbury Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20814

November 9, 2020

Ms. Leslye Howerton  
Master Planning Supervisor  
Montgomery County Planning Department  
2425 Reedie Drive, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Wheaton, MD 20902

**Re: Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee**

Dear Leslye,

I am writing regarding the request for nominations for the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan Implementation Advisory Committee ("Committee"). I would like to nominate myself to fill one of the vacancies for local residents on the Committee.

As you know, I have a long history of involvement with the implementation of planning in Bethesda. My engagement has come from my involvement in several development related constituencies, including:

- **Bethesda Urban Partnership:** I was Board Chair and a Board member, for two and six years, respectively
- **Woodmont Triangle Advisory Group:** I was a founding member and advised the Planning Board on implementation on an amendment to the prior Bethesda plan
- **East Bethesda Citizens Association:** I presently serve as President, but was previously President and Vice President of the organization during a period when the prior Bethesda plan was implemented
- **Purple Line Community Advisory Team:** I presently represent the East Bethesda community on this group which advises the Purple Line concessionaire on construction related matters.

In addition to these directly relevant experiences, I have also been a member of the Board of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, a member of the Board of the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District, a member of the Citizens Advisory Board at the National Institutes of Health, and was a prior Chair of the Montgomery County Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

My engagement in these various organizations has provided me with a unique collection of perspectives on development in and around Bethesda. I believe this knowledge and experience could be valuable to the Committee as it works with you and your colleagues to implement the Bethesda plan.

Thank you for your consideration. I may be reached at (202) 270-0094 or [andy.ohare@yahoo.com](mailto:andy.ohare@yahoo.com) to address any questions you may have regarding my candidacy for a position on the Committee.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping tail.

Andrew (Andy) T. O'Hare

**From:** [Jim Boomgard](#)  
**To:** [Howerton, Leslye](#)  
**Subject:** Indication of Interest - Bethesda Downtown Plan Implementation Advisory Committee  
**Date:** Thursday, November 12, 2020 8:22:07 AM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Mrs. Howerton:

Please consider my interest in serving as a member of the Bethesda Downtown Plan Implementation Advisory Committee.

I have been a property-owning resident of Bethesda since August of 2005 and currently live on Elm Street near Freeland Park and the Bethesda Row area. I am also the President and CEO of DAI Global, LLC ([www.dai.com](http://www.dai.com)) an international development company with its global headquarters in Bethesda since 1999. Our office is at 7600 Wisconsin Avenue where, in normal times, we base approximately 400 of our 5,000 employees worldwide.

My background is in economics and much of my technical experience is in economic development focused on the role of the private sector, small and medium enterprises, and how government, businesses and advocacy groups collaborate to create positive development outcomes. My work has principally been outside of the US in developing countries, but many of the issues and approaches are relevant.

As the leader of a company that currently operates in more than 80 countries around the world and has corporate offices in the US, UK, Belgium, Austria, Pakistan, Nigeria, much of my time is spent overseeing the development and implementation of strategies and plans. I am financially fluent and bottom line focused. ([www.linkedin.com/in/jamesboomgard/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/jamesboomgard/))

While this would be my first foray into local planning in the US, I am motivated to commit the time and energy to learning about the contribution that the Advisory Committee is able to make in the implementation of the Bethesda Plan.

If my candidacy is of interest to the Commission, I am happy to provide any additional biographical information that may be needed.

Jim

James J. (Jim) Boomgard  
[james\\_boomgard@dai.com](mailto:james_boomgard@dai.com)  
(202) 294-3616

**From:** [Todd Taskey](#)  
**To:** [Howerton, Leslye](#)  
**Subject:** Bethesda Sector Plan Advisor Committee  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 10, 2020 10:30:03 AM

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Leslye,

I am a 30 year resident of Montgomery County and have lived on Manning Drive in Bethesda since 2011.

I am a fan of the development in Downtown Bethesda and also value the mix of residential within walking distance of a nationally respected mixed use environment. I believe there should be a balance between these two factors that encourages development and property value appreciation.

If you think my experience and perspective will be valuable to the committee, I will be happy to contribute my time.

Thanks for your consideration.

Todd Taskey, Principal

Office: 202-567-7151

Mobile: 301-529-1100

[Website](#) - [LinkedIn](#)