



Memorandum

TO: Montgomery Planning Board

FROM: Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, Downcounty Planning *EHM*

RE: Bethesda Downtown Amenity Fund Transfer Reallocation

DATE: September 19, 2024

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Board reallocate Bethesda Downtown Amenity Funds to the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) for public art or other placemaking initiatives in downtown Bethesda.

BACKGROUND

The CR zone requires Optional Method Development properties of a certain size and with a certain number of right-of-way frontages to provide a designated percentage of the site as open space (Section 59.4.5.4.B.1). The General Development Requirements of the Zoning Code that govern open space allow developers to satisfy the requirement off-site (Section 59.6.3.6.C.) by either constructing the improvements directly or making an equivalent payment. Staff refers to financial contributions collected under the provision as an “Amenity Fund” for the master plan area in which they are conditioned (e.g., Bethesda, Silver Spring).

In September 2019, as required by a condition of Planning Board approval, the ZOM Bethesda project provided to the M-NCPPC a financial contribution of \$785,278 for off-site public improvements in downtown Bethesda. This contribution was placed into the Amenity Fund for Bethesda.

In December 2022, the Planning Board approved transfers of Amenity Funds to the Parks Department of \$300,000 for streetscape improvements along the street frontages of the renovated Caroline Freeland Urban Park and to BUP of the balance of the funds, \$485,278, to be used toward a more-permanent implementation of the successful Norfolk Avenue Streeterly opened during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

DISCUSSION

For a variety of reasons, including operational and safety concerns, BUP is no longer pursuing the Streeterly, and is currently working with the Parks Department for disposition of furnishings purchased for it. Of the \$485,278 transferred to BUP, approximately \$173,100 remains unspent. BUP is an exemplary organization involved in many excellent placemaking

initiatives throughout downtown Bethesda. Staff is recommending that the Planning Board approve BUP's use of the remaining funds for a current mural project for the Capital Crescent Trail bridge over Bradley Boulevard that is projected to cost about \$150,000, and/or other similar placemaking efforts.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. December 2022 Bethesda Amenity Fund Transfer Staff Report