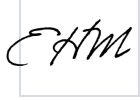


**BETHESDA DOWNTOWN PLAN MINOR MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT  
PUBLIC HEARING**

**Description**

The Planning Board will receive public testimony on the Public Hearing Draft of the Bethesda Downtown Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment.



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## MASTER PLAN INFORMATION

### Topic

Bethesda Downtown Plan Minor Master Plan  
Amendment Public Hearing

### Date

November 18, 2024

### Lead Planner

Elza Hisel-McCoy

### Planning Division

Downcounty Planning

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## SUMMARY

The Bethesda Downtown Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment (MMPA) recommends technical updates to the 2017 *Bethesda Downtown Plan* to improve implementation of recommendations related to new parks, transportation infrastructure, a new recreation center, affordable housing, and more within a Plan Area of roughly 450 acres.

All master plans demonstrate that the transportation network can support recommended new development. In 2016, when the *Bethesda Downtown Plan* was being developed, the methodology to make such a demonstration was based on anticipated vehicle delay at specific intersections inside and near the master plan area about 30 years in the future. This analysis determined that, in order to meet the delay standard, no more than 32.4 million square feet of total development would be allowed. Since then, the County Council has replaced this approach with an expanded set of metrics, discussed in greater detail below, that assess development's potential impacts more broadly, focusing also on transit and bicycles and access to jobs and more.

The 2017 Plan recommended that once total development approached the density limit, Montgomery Planning and the Planning Board should check in with the County Council to see if additional recommendations are needed to help implement public amenity and infrastructure recommendations like new parks and transportation-related improvements to support development. Downtown Bethesda reached this threshold in fall 2023, and after public engagement and comment, Planning staff and the Planning Board recommended that the County Council authorize the development of this MMPA. The MMPA does not revisit the entire 2017 Plan. The existing recommendations addresses zoning, parks, transportation, housing, urban design, community facilities, the environment and other topics remain unchanged.

Based on months of conversations and input from the resident and developer communities, the Bethesda Downtown Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC), and County agencies, the MMPA recommends:

- updating the overlay zone to remove a specific development level,
- to continue to require transportation-related improvements and PIPs on a project-by-project basis and monitor progress and the need for public investment in transportation and school infrastructure on an annual and biannual basis through the schools assessment, capital budget, and capital improvement program, and
- to incentivize investment in community support networks like affordable housing, parks, and a new recreation center.

These recommendations help implement public amenity and infrastructure recommendations like new parks and transportation-related improvements by using the tools that have made the 2017 Plan a success. Private development will continue to construct or pay for these improvements and more through PIPs, dedication of new recommended parks, transportation-related frontage improvements, and school and transportation impact taxes, on top of significant contributions to the county tax base. The public Capital Improvement Program will continue to use these revenues to design and construct bus rapid transit, the Purple Line, the Capital Crescent Trail, new bike lanes, and more.

The team began community engagement work in the spring of 2024 and the Planning Board approved the Scope of Work for the Minor Master Plan Amendment in June 2024. In September 2024, the planning team briefed the Planning Board on preliminary recommendations based on community engagement and conversations, consultant analyses, and staff work.

Staff presented the Working Draft of the Bethesda Downtown Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment to the Planning Board on October 24, 2024, when the Planning Board authorized staff to prepare the Public Hearing Draft of the Bethesda Downtown Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment and scheduled a public hearing for December 2, 2024 in the second floor auditorium of the M-NCPPC Wheaton Headquarters building at 2425 Reddie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902. The public hearing was advertised in the Washington Times on November 1, 2024 and the Public Hearing Draft Plan was distributed to all required stakeholders, both in hard copy and electronic format, and online to the general public.

The public hearing record will remain open until December 9, 2024 at 5 p.m. for additional written testimony to be submitted to the Planning Board. Staff will summarize the testimony and conduct the first work session with the Planning Board on December 12.

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## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Public Hearing Draft of the Bethesda Downtown Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment

Attachment B – Public Correspondence to Date