



EBCA

**EAST BETHESDA
CITIZENS ASSOCIATION**

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

WWW.EBCA.ORG

SUMMER 2016

Representing the 1200 households North of East-West Highway, South of Jones Bridge Road, East of Wisconsin Avenue and West of Columbia Country Club.

Middle School Update

By Monica Hayes, Education Chair

East Bethesda students are currently assigned to Westland Middle School in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) cluster of schools. Due to enrollment increases at Westland, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is building a second middle school for the B-CC cluster which will open in August 2017. In January 2016, the Board of Education (BOE) authorized a boundary study to review options for the service area of the new Middle School #2, and associated changes to Westland. The Boundary Advisory Committee will complete their evaluation of the ten boundary options developed by MCPS staff using committee developed criteria in June.

EBCA conducted two surveys to gather input from East Bethesda residents on their preferred options. Overall 108 responses were received for the two surveys. The clear preference of survey-takers is to stay at Westland, with Option 1 the most preferred. Option 8, which sends East Bethesda to the new Middle School #2 and also splits our students from the rest of the Bethesda Elementary students who remain at Westland, was the least preferred option. EBCA has shared the results with committee members.

The Superintendent's recommended option will be released in October 2016. The BOE will conduct a work session, hold public hearings and take action in November. The boundary changes will be effective August 2017 with the opening of the new school.

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President's Notebook

By Lisa McCabe, President

Happy Spring, East Bethesda! It was great to see so many neighbors at our EBCA General Membership meeting a couple of months ago to talk about safety in our community. More to come on developing the Neighborhood Watch in the near future. As you make your summer travel plans, please take a few steps to keep your house safe, such as letting a neighbor know when you will be gone so they can take in any packages or mail while you are out, and asking a neighbor to bring up your trash cans. Also, be sure to keep on a few lights or set up timers for your lights before you head out.

Thank you to all the East Bethesda residents who sent emails and letters to the Montgomery County Planning Board and County Council regarding the Bethesda Sector Plan. It is important that we each take the time to engage on issues that are important to the EBCA community. Each individual letter does make a difference. We will be sharing

more information on this plan at our EBCA General Membership Meeting on Wednesday, May 25th at 7:00 pm at BCC High School cafeteria, including discussions on establishing a position to advocate with the County Council. You must be current on your EBCA dues to participate in a vote on a position.

As we end the summer and look to the start of the school year, we are looking for volunteers to organize and put on the EBCA Labor Day Picnic on Monday, September 5th, 2-4 pm. Have a favorite entertaining you'd like to see there, or game you think would be fun? Use your creativity to have some fun with your neighbors. We can help you with ideas but do need people to make sure it runs smoothly. To volunteer, please contact me at president@ebca.org

Please get involved. We are always looking for residents to join the EBCA Executive Committee. We depend on volunteers to keep our organization going. See you on May 25th!

EBCA General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, May 25th, 7:00 pm

BCC High School Cafeteria

I. Introductions

II. Committee Updates: Membership, Social, Parks, Schools

III. Discussion of Bethesda Sector Plan

IV. New Business

Neighborhood News

The Montgomery County Planning staff has proposed a new Downtown Bethesda Sector Plan with significant increases in height and density that could almost double the current density of downtown Bethesda. The Plan allows for building heights of up to 250 feet on blocks that are adjacent to single-family homes. The Planning Board then approved many developer requests for ADDITIONAL height and density. In some cases greater heights and densities have been proposed on the east side of Wisconsin, abutting our neighborhood, than the commercial west side. **In total, greater heights and densities have been proposed for East Bethesda's borders than any other edge community.**

Adequate studies were not performed on how the additional density will impact our already-strained area, including traffic congestion, park use, school overcrowding, and transit concerns.

Over a series of 12 worksessions dozens property owners have requested greater height and density than what was proposed in the Staff Plan, and the Planning Board has approved the majority of requests. Due to public outcry and a fantastic showing of opposition via emails and letters (with East Bethesda well represented), the board voted to reduce just a few of these heights at the May 12 Worksession. But there is still a lot to be done:

Three Ways You Can Impact the Future of Our Neighborhood:

1. Attend Planning Board Meetings and future County Council Meetings about the Bethesda Sector Plan.
2. Stay informed. Watch the Planning Board webcasts, read the minutes posted on the Planning Board site, check out CBAR.info, join the EBCA Facebook group, and sign up for the EBCA email list.
3. Email Officials
 - Montgomery County Planning Chairman Casey Anderson at MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org
 - Montgomery County Council at County.Council@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov
 - County Councilmember Roger Berliner at Councilmember.Berliner@montgomerycountymd.gov
 - Montgomery County Planning Director Gwen Wright at Gwen.Wright@montgomeryplanning.org
 - Copy EBCA at contact@ebca.org

Urge the Planning Staff, Board, and County Council to:

- Scale back the Plan! Do NOT allow excessive heights and densities - particularly on blocks adjacent to single-family homes.
- Require greater step-downs and setbacks for buildings along our transition areas.
- Enforce the concept of a substantial Greenway buffer along our edges.
- Perform further studies on the impact to infrastructure: traffic, transit, parks, and schools.
- Maintain the scale and charm of our neighborhood while updating downtown Bethesda's appeal and amenities.

These images show the proposed **SCALE** of buildings being proposed in the Sector Plan. (These are not renderings of actual buildings. Examples: Left: 250 foot building, Right: 60 foot step-down on a residential street.)



Bethesda Sector Plan Proposals

Please review the following and join us for the May 25th meeting to consider a vote to make this our position. You must be a current EBCA member in order to vote.

1. Defer approval of the plan by County Council until adequate studies have been done on the impact further development and density will have on area infrastructure (schools, traffic, parks and transportation), recognizing that adding multi-family units to the neighborhood has a greater net impact on schools, traffic, and other infrastructure than the turnover of single family homes.
2. Address existing and worsening traffic congestion that compromises pedestrian, bicyclist and vehicular safety, and threatens the reliability of emergency services.
3. Our neighborhood consists of many residents who walk and bike throughout the Downtown Bethesda area, including families and children who walk and bike to school at Bethesda Elementary and many other schools and daycare in and around East Bethesda and the Woodmont Triangle Area. This requires crossing many busy roads, including Wisconsin Avenue, Old Georgetown Road, Arlington Road and East-West Highway. It is critical that walkability, and pedestrian and biker safety is given greater consideration in the implementation of this Plan.
4. Enforce the Sector Plan's goal to "preserve and protect existing single-family neighborhoods," which cannot be done only by addressing what happens IN those single-family neighborhoods, but also AROUND them.
5. The sector plan should be reevaluated at regular intervals with ongoing consideration of school capacity.
6. Maintain all existing parks and increase parks and green space. Look to convert surface parking lots to green space to act as a buffer for single family homes, apartments and townhouses as proposed in the Staff's Eastern Greenway Neighborhood Green Urban Park recommendation.
7. Increase the width (in feet) of the Greenway/setback (as stated in the Greenway Tier definitions) to be greater than the proposed height of the building step-downs along Tilbury Street. In addition, the concept of the Greenway should be extended north to a more natural cut-off at Chestnut Street (as the length of Tilbury Street is part of a proposed Bike Priority/Canopy Corridor).
8. We understand that Norfolk Avenue / Woodmont Avenue on the West side of Wisconsin is to be considered a Gateway Area. In order to preserve the scale and character along our residential border, and to ensure pedestrian and bicyclist safety, this implementation should not apply to the East side of Wisconsin Avenue.
9. Maintain stepdown heights of 35 feet on the 4700 hundred blocks of all residential streets from Avondale to Chelsea Lane.
10. Reduce maximum heights (120') and density proposed on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue from Avondale to Chelsea Lane, consistent with the treatment of other edge communities in the Staff Plan.
11. Reduce maximum heights (145') and density on the west side of Wisconsin.
12. We do not support the 175+ foot height and increased density being proposed in the Staff Plan and Board recommendations for along Wisconsin Avenue.
13. We are concerned about traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, and cut-through traffic should the Pearl District be developed as proposed, particularly in light of its proximity to schools and daycare centers.
14. Provide setbacks to all structures to allow for pedestrian traffic, street trees, and to act as an additional buffer. East Bethesda's streets are narrow, making additional buffer components critical.
15. While we do support the concept of a Civic Green along Cheltenham Drive west of Wisconsin Avenue, we do not support the recommended heights and densities of buildings being proposed to surround the Civic Green and Veteran's Park, as they undermine the quality and purpose of these spaces.

Middle School Feedback and BCC High School Addition Plans

Continued from page 1....

EBCA encourages residents to continue to provide their views on the middle school options to committee representatives, their schools and MCPS. For more information, see ebca.org.

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The new addition project will increase the capacity of Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School to accommodate projected student enrollment.

The current student enrollment is 1,989 students and is projected to be 2,367 students by the 2020-2021 school year. The capacity of the current building is 1,683 students so there are eight relocatable classrooms on the 16.4-acre school site -- the smallest high school site in the county. To meet the program needs of the school, 34 classrooms and support spaces will be added.

New Features Will Include:

- 34 Teaching stations
- 71 Additional on-site parking spaces
- Raised tennis court structure
- Two-story wing along the north face of the existing building
- Covered, open air plaza overlooking the stadium
- Dance room opening to a small atrium lobby with views of the stadium below
- Four-story wing to the west of the existing gymnasium
- Two new stair towers
- Elevator to all four floor levels and the elevated tennis deck
- Wireless network access and interactive whiteboard systems in new classrooms

The construction contract will be awarded in July 2016 and the project is slated for completion in August 2018. For more information, see ebca.org.



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**EAST BETHESDA
CITIZENS ASSOCIATION**

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Spring Park Clean-Up

Thank you to all the EBCA Neighbors who participated in the Spring Clean-up at Lynnbrook Park on May 7th. It was a great day and a lot was accomplished. A special thanks to Amanda Farber for organizing and bringing the donuts!! Keep an eye out on Facebook and email for additional opportunities to help keep our neighborhood looking good.

Membership Reminder

Have you joined EBCA this year yet? It is a new year in EBCA! Time to renew your membership for 2016. Please support our neighborhood activities, this newsletter, and the community activism that makes East Bethesda one of the most desirable places in which to invest and raise a family. \$15 per voting member, but additional contributions are always welcome.

You can renew in person at the May 25th meeting (please bring cash or check), online at www.ebca.org, or by mail by sending your names, address, email and a check for \$15 per member to:

EBCA – Membership
P.O. Box 41020
Bethesda, MD 20824

Tree Montgomery

You only have a couple of more weeks to sign up for a free tree from Mo Co programs - or you may need to wait 2-3 years for one. Remember the importance of trees to human and environmental health. Trees lower temperatures in summer, leading to energy savings. They improve the air quality, lowering the incidence of respiratory problems. They reduce storm runoff and create a habitat for birds and other needed critters. Trees also have a calming effect on traffic and increase property values when they are well kept.

The Department of Transportation offers a free tree for the county right of way in front of your house (low trees under electric power lines and shade trees where there are no power lines if the space is deemed appropriate). Tree Montgomery will plant a SHADE tree anywhere on your property - front or back - if the location meets certain criteria.

To sign up, please contact one of the following:

- Caroline DeCesare mungodec@verizon.net
- Maj-Britt Dohlie mdohlie@gmail.com
- Amanda Farber amandafarber@hotmail.com
- Jill McKay mckay.jill@gmail.com
- Ann Posner bodicea0@yahoo.com