As we compiled this Annual Report and reflected on this past year, from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, I was overwhelmed with gratitude for the dedication and passion displayed by our Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) team, including our hardworking Board of Directors, and for the strength of our Bethesda community. BUP is proud of the work we do to promote and maintain the downtown as one of the most vibrant destinations in our region and we are fortunate to serve a fantastic neighborhood of retailers, restaurants, businesses and residents.

Although some of our traditional events were cancelled, the BUP team creatively developed virtual and outdoor activations that supported our restaurants and retailers and provided opportunities for people to connect and engage. The Bethesda Streetery, which was unveiled as an economic recovery response during the pandemic, was implemented in summer 2020 and became a loved addition to the downtown. First dreamt up as a solution to help struggling restaurants, the open-air eatery is a place of connection for the community. The safe and cheerful atmosphere was a welcome “taste” of normalcy. The overwhelming support and excitement for the outdoor dining space has propelled plans to make The Streetery a more permanent feature on Norfolk Avenue. And the success of the dining set-up has been recognized not only by residents, business owners and several media outlets, but also by the International Downtown Association (IDA) with the Downtown Achievement Award for Excellence.

In keeping with BUP’s focus on supporting local businesses during challenging times, the “Bethesda Bucks” digital gift card was launched in December 2020. The gift card can be used at participating downtown retailers, and is an ideal way for someone to give the gift of an experience in Bethesda.

Seeing smiling faces and dancing families at the Norfolk Ave. Streetery during our Friday Concert Series that began in May 2021, has been a bright spot. We were lucky to enjoy acoustic sets at the Streetery in fall 2020 and Facebook Live Concerts in the winter, but we were thrilled to bring back bands and see the streets alive with music and activity.

BUP’s branding looks different, as we introduced a new logo and tagline during the summer of 2021. The recognizable BUP red remains, but with an updated, refreshed logo and the tagline, “A World in One Neighborhood.” What hasn’t changed is the team’s commitment to providing top-notch service to Bethesda.

As we celebrate the resiliency of our community, we also applaud the progress achieved over the past year. We look forward to another year of growth and rebuilding. Bethesda is always evolving, but the passion, heart and energy remain the same.

Sincerely,

Jeff Burton, Executive Director
Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.
I am honored to be selected as Chair of the Bethesda Urban Partnership Board of Directors, an organization I have had the immense pleasure of being part of for many years. As I assume the position for the July 2021 - June 2022 term, I would be remiss to not both thank and commend our community for its resiliency. In the face of the global pandemic, the committed BUP team, Board of Directors, Bethesda business owners and residents continued to shine a light on our downtown by serving and supporting each other.

As a team we are dedicated to promoting Bethesda’s terrific amenities, while also supporting and helping our local businesses as we recover and emerge stronger. The people, well-manicured streetscapes, unique restaurants, favorite retailers, arts venues and more, in addition to the superb location in the Greater Washington, D.C. area, continue to make Bethesda the ideal location to live, work, play and do business.

The future continues to look bright as development projects progress and new businesses and residences open. Maizon Bethesda, The Elm, The Edge and 8300 Woodmont are all exciting, new apartment complexes that are open and welcoming new residents. The Marriott Headquarters project is also making great strides and is on track to be completed in summer 2022.

Bethesda’s culturally rich community, designated as a Maryland Arts & Entertainment District, is one of the many reasons developers, employees and residents seek out our downtown. I am pleased to also serve as Co-Chair of the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District Board which works with BUP to further enrich the arts. We have continued to brighten our cityscape with murals. Thanks to the support of both county and corporate partners, the fourth “Paint the Town” Mural was completed on the Rugby/Woodmont Ave. garage in 2020, and we look forward to the next mural project which is now in the works. We will also continue to highlight the arts with long-standing programs including the Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards, Bethesda Film Fest, The Trawick Prize and more.

The downtown is constantly growing and changing, so while we successfully navigated through uncertain times, we continue to look ahead. BUP’s new branding campaign reflects that forward-thinking mindset. Thank you to the Board Branding Committee that worked together to select BUP’s new look.

I am grateful to have the privilege of working alongside the BUP team and my Board colleagues as we continue to maintain, support and promote all that Bethesda has to offer. As Chair, I look forward to another successful year working to ensure that Bethesda is one of the premier downtowns in our region.

Best regards,

Jane Fairweather, Chair
Bethesda Urban Partnership
Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. (BUP) was established by Montgomery County in 1994 to market and maintain downtown Bethesda. Throughout the last 27 years, BUP’s 35 employees who work in marketing, maintenance/field operations, administration and transportation management have continued to promote and support the beautiful and vibrant downtown. With the onset of COVID-19 and the ripple effect of the global pandemic, 2020 was an unprecedented year as all communities navigated uncertainties. Throughout all of the changes, public health precautions and twists and turns of the year, BUP remained present in the community. The team was committed to helping local businesses, managing the grounds and finding new opportunities to welcome and engage residents, visitors, artists and more.
A dynamic neighborhood within the Greater Washington D.C. area, Bethesda offers a variety of restaurants, retailers, entertainment venues and events. BUP’s marketing team manages unique and exciting programming, including community festivals and arts events, as well as highlights the many destinations throughout the downtown. BUP also manages field operations, Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS), the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District and the Bethesda Circulator.

BUP is operated by an 11-member Board of Directors comprising residents, businesses and developers appointed by the County Executive. The organization is funded primarily by revenue generated from the Bethesda Parking Lot District fees, in addition to the commercial Urban District property tax. Private sponsors partner with BUP on events such as Taste of Bethesda, the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival and Imagination Bethesda.

Bethesda Circulator

The Bethesda Circulator is a helpful mode of transportation for those looking for an easy and free way around town. The buses are on route Monday-Friday, 7-11pm and Saturday, 10am-11pm. The route services north to Battery Lane and south to Bradley Boulevard and includes stops at popular Bethesda destinations including the Metro, public parking garages, restaurants and shops.
The BUP maintenance team did not miss a beat during 2020. The dedicated team members who remove trash, sweep streets, maintain Veterans Park, mend sidewalks, trim trees and plant flowers, kept the downtown refreshed and inviting. Always an important task, the team continued to brighten Bethesda during a time when there was an increased emphasis on outdoor congregating.

The team also assists with on-site needs at BUP events and manages maintenance requests at Gallery B, Studio B and Triangle Art Studios. The team is certified in First Aid, CPR and AED.

Ask Me Team
The Ask Me Team is on duty Wednesday – Sunday and can be found around town ready to help patrons. The Ambassadors are available to provide emergency assistance, give directions and assist with downtown’s maintenance needs. The team also helps at BUP’s events and have been an integral part of managing The Streetery on Norfolk Avenue.
Maintenance and Ask Me Team Members:
Matt Flack, Field Operation Manager
José Castro, Maintenance Supervisor
Albert Lamquaye, Ask Me Team Supervisor
Carlos Cárdenas, Ask Me Team
Tito Castro, Trash Removal Team
Datrell Childers, Street Sweeper
Manuel Constanza, Landscaper
Adan Diaz-Reyes, Trash Removal Team
José Gaitán, Urban Beautification Squad
Jorge Hernandez, Landscaper
Darren Lewis, Ask Me Team
John Mattingly, Ask Me Team
Melvin Muñoz-Macoto, Landscaper
Jon Peczkowski, Ask Me Team
Celio Peña, Landscaper
Martir Salmeron, Landscaper
Jaime Villanueva, Landscaper
Felix Villatoro, Landscaper
Guillermo Yataco, Urban Beautification Squad
BUP’s marketing team has the exciting task of promoting downtown Bethesda as a world-class destination for dining, shopping, the arts and a place filled with the best amenities outside your front door for downtown dwellers. BUP’s website, www.bethesda.org, e-newsletter, social media posts and free printed guides are great resources to learn more about the restaurants, retailers and venues throughout the downtown.
Bethesda Urban Partnership underwent its first re-branding in 2021. Having the same logo and identity since 1994, BUP decided it was time for a refreshed and renewed look to complement all of the new and exciting development, new residents and more that downtown Bethesda is experiencing as the downtown continues to grow.

In January, a special committee from the BUP Board began working with Friendly Design in Washington, D.C. on a new branding campaign. Keeping the signature red but seeking a new and modern look, the committee and designers worked together for several months to develop a sleek and inviting new logo, tagline and new designs for our assets including our fleet of trucks, gateway signs, uniforms and more in downtown Bethesda. In addition to the new logo, a new tagline “A world in one neighborhood” now welcomes you to Bethesda.
As part of promoting downtown Bethesda, the marketing team produces festivals, cultural events and Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District programming for all to enjoy.

Due to the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, plans for many of BUP’s annual events were reimagined or cancelled. BUP could not host the Outdoor Movies, Taste of Bethesda, Winter Wonderland, Play In A Day, Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards, Bethesda Fine Arts Festival and Imagination Bethesda. However, the team sought new opportunities, new activations and virtual events for community engagement during an unfortunate year.

The well-loved addition of the Bethesda Streetery that was introduced in June 2020 continued throughout the year. When live entertainment was once again permitted by the county in fall 2020, acoustic sets were scheduled for Friday and Saturday evenings. The addition of music was a terrific attraction for patrons and provided BUP an opportunity to support local musicians. As the weather got colder, the indoor restaurant dining restrictions tightened because of Covid-19 concerns. To meet the need for outdoor dining space, in December 2020 the Streetery was winterized. In accordance with public safety and health guidelines, tents and heaters were added. Tents were removed in the spring, and the Streetery once again welcomed more diners, including Cordell Avenue on Friday and Saturday evenings to allow for additional seating. This essential winterization of The Streetery was made possible through general funds appropriated by the Montgomery County Council.
Live music returned to the Streetery in May 2021 for **Friday Summer Concerts** from 6-8pm on Norfolk Ave. Bands entertained the happy Streetery crowds as people ate, drank and danced to kick off the weekend.

The return of live music in May was exciting – but music had remained part of BUP’s event offerings throughout the year. **Facebook Live Concerts** were held on Thursday evenings in January and February 2021. Listeners could stream the live content from the BUP Facebook page and be treated to music at home by a talented local musician each week.

The virtual concerts were one of the many changes to the event schedule throughout 2020-2021; an opportunity for BUP to host “gatherings” without a large in-person event. With the cancellation of Taste of Bethesda, “**Savor Bethesda**” was born. In lieu of the one-day festival that brings restaurants, entertainment and thousands of people to the street, **Savor Bethesda Restaurant Week** ran from October 1-11, 2020 and featured great deals for both dine-in and take-out customers. Participating downtown restaurants offered special $10, $20 or $35 menus. BUP promoted the special week, encouraging patrons to check out the deals and support their favorite restaurants.

Another opportunity to support Bethesda restaurants that was introduced over the course of the year was the rollout of **Bethesda Bucks**. In December 2020 BUP announced the new downtown Bethesda e-gift card. Made available as the holiday season kicked off, the gift card was, and is, a unique way to give the ultimate experiential gift of shopping, dining or pampering in downtown Bethesda. Announced during a time when local shops and restaurants needed support, the gift card encouraged holiday spending downtown and emphasized the importance of shopping local. The digital card, which can be purchased at www.bethesda.org, makes for easy gifting year-round and is the ideal gift for holidays, birthdays, a thank you and more.
The **2021 Local Writer’s Showcase** once again honored writers throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia. Over 800 pieces were submitted to the Bethesda Essay, Short Story and Poetry Contests. 33 writers were recognized and $4,450 in prize money was awarded. First place winners also received classes and memberships to The Writer’s Center as well as the opportunity to have their work published in *Bethesda Magazine*.

On March 18, 2021 the **Bethesda Essay & Short Story Contest Awards Ceremony** was held virtually and all winners had the chance to read an excerpt from their work. The Showcase continued virtually on March 25th with a Poetry Contest Awards Ceremony and Reading. Contest judge and former Poet Laureate Michael Collier shared his poetry and was joined by guest poets, Omowole Jesse N. Alexander and Lindsay Lusby. The Poetry Contest Winners also shared their original works.

Produced by the Bethesda Urban Partnership, the Local Writer’s Showcase was sponsored by *Bethesda Magazine* and The Writer’s Center, with support also provided by The Trawick Foundation.
Online and Social Media

Bethesda Urban Partnership’s website is a helpful resource for information about Bethesda, including restaurant and retail guides, upcoming events and more. The weekly e-newsletter, also a handy Bethesda tool, has a continuously growing list of subscribers. BUP shares both BUP-specific and downtown Bethesda updates via Facebook, Twitter (@BethesdaUp) and Instagram @BethesdaBUP.

BUP’s online presence remained especially helpful throughout the past year as more virtual outreach was required. The ease and frequency with which BUP could share updates including County health restrictions, new virtual events and local business promotions was paramount to staying connected with residents, business owners and visitors.
The state of Maryland designated downtown Bethesda as an Arts & Entertainment District effective July 1, 2002 and re-designated again on July 2, 2012. Special tax incentives benefit artists, arts enterprises and developers that are located within the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District. Bethesda Urban Partnership is the manager of Bethesda’s Arts & Entertainment District, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. BUP’s marketing team works alongside a Board of Directors to progressively improve upon the arts representation and initiatives in the downtown and implement ideas for future artistic endeavors.

Bethesda Arts & Entertainment Board of Directors; July 2020 – June 2021

Executive Committee
Co-President: Cathy Bernard, Local Resident
Co-President: Jane Fairweather, Jane Fairweather Team/Long & Foster and Bethesda Urban Partnership Board member
Secretary/Treasurer: Jad Donohoe, The Donohoe Companies

Board Members
Tim Blanchard, TDC Shows
Suzanne Firstenberg, Artist and Local Resident
Judy Gilbert, Artist and Local Resident
David Goldberg, Local Resident
Mark Kramer, Kramer Architects
Leslie Lane, Local Resident
Jan McNamara, Imagination Stage
Jerry Morenoff, JEMC Associates
Zachary Oxman, Artist and Local Artist
Kenneth Hartman (Non-voting), Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
Initiatives

The Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District produces high quality arts and cultural programming that benefits residents, businesses and tourists and supports the community’s growth and vitality. Events produced by the Arts & Entertainment District highlight local artists, writers, filmmakers and performers and provide them a venue to show their work in the community. These programs also promote Bethesda’s artistic and cultural resources and attract nearly 1,000 artists and more than 30,000 attendees each year.

A new Bethesda Paint the Town mural on the Rugby/Woodmont Avenue Garage was completed and dedicated in September 2020. The mural, which features vivid, bright and colorfully drawn people commuting via bicycle, scooter, walking and more was created and painted by Baltimore-based artist Megan Lewis. Jarrell Dockett assisted Megan with the installation, helping to paint the mural and drive the lift. This installment of Paint the Town was made possible thanks to partners including Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission, The Donohoe Companies, Duball, LLC, Greenhill and Stonebridge.

BUP manages Gallery B, a nonprofit art gallery that features monthly exhibits by regional artists. After remaining closed for several months due to the pandemic, the gallery reopened in September 2020. The Trawick Prize exhibit welcomed patrons back in September, followed by the Bethesda Painting Awards show in October. The Spring 2021 exhibit lineup included a diverse group show by the ART4US Co-op in February; “Worker,” a photography exhibit by Clark Construction in March; “People with Something to Say,” a solo show by renowned artist Anna Soevik in April and “Spirit of Time,” a group show curated by Gallery NK in May.

BUP also manages Studio B and Triangle Art Studios, studio spaces that serve as both work and exhibit areas for resident, local artists. Studio B features studios occupied by Linda Button, Judy Gilbert, Shanthi Chandrasekar and Sara Leibman. At Triangle Art Studios, visitors can find artists Maruja Quezada, Barb Siegel and Stephen Estrada. Stephen, a landscape artist who paints serene sunsets, crashing waves and beautiful blue skies, moved in February 2021 and is the newest addition to the group.

Triangle Art Studios features an additional front exhibit space that occasionally houses small shows other than the work of the studio artists. In April 2021, GB Youth Media hosted an exhibit “Empathy to Solidarity: Activism Through the Media Arts,” curated by art historian, Shereka Mosley and artist, Ismael Oates. In May 2021, The Bethesda Historical Society showcased The Bethesda Historical Exhibit celebrating 150 years of Bethesda. The show was a special pop-up featuring memorabilia, photographs, stories and more about the downtown.
2021 Bethesda Film Fest Films

A Mirror of the Earth – Film by Isabelle Carbonell, Rockville, MD

The Good Candidate – Film by Dan Byrnes, Matt Collin, Aaron Evans, Pablo Henrich, Walk Hull, Stephanie Hydal and Emiliano Lopez, Washington, D.C.

Lipstick and Leather – Film by Amy Oden, Baltimore, MD

Squeegee – Film by Khalid Ali, Baltimore, MD

West Virginia – Covid and Hunger Collide – Film by Brian Boenau, Fairfax Station, VA

Films by high school filmmakers:
Shi Fu Paul – Film by Pearl Sweeney, Timonium, MD
You Think You Know Me – Film by Mikayah Lee, Washington, D.C.

The 9th annual Bethesda Film Fest, supported by Leslie & Bruce Lane, was once again held virtually and featured seven short documentaries made by local filmmakers. The selected films, including two by young filmmakers, were available to view online for free in advance of the April 16 virtual discussion and Q&A with the filmmakers and the films’ subjects. The event was also generously supported by The Bernard Family Foundation, The Donohoe Companies, The Jane Fairweather Team, Suzanne Firstenberg, David Goldberg, Jan McNamara, Jerry Morenoff, Kramer Architects and Oxman Studios.

Fall 2020 celebrated both the 18th annual Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards and the 16th annual Bethesda Painting Awards and in June 2021 the 17th annual Bethesda Painting Awards returned. Each regional art competition, founded by Carol Trawick, awards up to $14,000 in prize monies to artists.

The Trawick Prize group exhibit was on display at Gallery B September 4-26, 2020. The show featured artwork by eight finalists who were selected by the jury, which included Larry Cook, 2017 Trawick Prize Winner; Assistant Professor of Photography, Howard University; Carrie Fucile, Professor of Digital Art & Design, Towson University; and Noah Simblist, Associate Professor of Art and Chair of Painting & Printmaking; Virginia Commonwealth University.

The 16th annual Bethesda Painting Awards finalists’ show was at Gallery B October 9-31, 2020 and showcased the work of 8 painters. The entries were juried by Paula Crawford, Director of Painting, George Mason University; Gavin Glakas, Painter, Painting Instructor at Yellow Barn Studio, Glen Echo, and B.G. Muhn, Painting Professor, Georgetown University and 2008 Bethesda Painting Awards, Best in Show Winner

Returning to the competition’s typical summer dates, the 17th annual Bethesda Painting Awards was held June 3 – 26, 2021. Eight finalists were selected by the competition’s panel which consisted of Emily Conover, Painting and Drawing Teacher, University of Maryland; John Lee, Assistant Professor of Painting, College of William and Mary; and Katherine Mann, Artist, Best in Show Winner of the Bethesda Painting Awards 2017.
2020 Bethesda Painting Awards
Winners
$10,000 Best in Show
Lawrence Cromwell, Baltimore, MD
$2,000 Second Place
Chee Keong Kung, McLean, VA
$1,000 Third Place
Temi Wynston Edun, Columbia, MD
$1,000 Young Artist
Monica Ikegwu, Baltimore, MD

2020 Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards
$10,000 Best in Show
Daniel Wickerham & Malcolm Lomax, Baltimore, MD
$2,000 Second Place
Erick Antonio Benitez, Baltimore, MD
$1,000 Third Place
Nara Park, Washington, D.C.
$1,000 Young Artist
Bria Sterling-Wilson, Baltimore, MD

2021 Bethesda Painting Awards
Winners
$10,000 Best in Show
Megan Lewis, Baltimore, MD
$2,000 Second Place
Amy Boone-McCreesh, Baltimore, MD
$1,000 Third Place
Marybeth Chew, Baltimore, MD

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Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS) was established in 2000 to help manage the traffic in downtown Bethesda by marketing local, state and federal commuter benefits programs and tax incentives to employers and local residents. BTS promotes alternate transportation such as rail, bus, carpools and biking with the goal of reducing the number of Bethesda employees who drive alone to work.

Each year BTS hosts one of the largest Bike to Work Day events in the Washington D.C. region with over 600 registrants. Due to ongoing precautions because of the pandemic, 2021 Bike to Work Day was altered. However, the event still had great participation with close to 400 registrants. BTS worked with two Bethesda bicycle shops to hand out free event shirts to registered cyclists. Additionally, the team set-up a station at the Norfolk Avenue Streetery and gave out branded towels and bike maps.

The Walk & Ride Challenge, which usually has over 1,000 participants County-wide, was changed due to the pandemic, which resulted in the decrease in number of commuters. The 2020 Challenge participants, which included teleworkers, were encouraged to incorporate walking into their day and asked to record their steps. The top three teams were given prizes, including gift cards to local businesses. Participants also played BTS’s Telework Bingo and checked off tasks on a card to win prizes.
BTS continued to assist 50 employers with filing an online Transportation Demand Management Plan with MCDOT. The team collaborated with The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce and reached out to new employers to secure new and voluntary Plans. BTS maintains a database of 1,388 employers. Additionally, the team connected with employers at several local Chamber events and meetings throughout the year to promote BTS services. Each year, BTS nominates Bethesda employers to the Metropolitan Council of Governments, Commuter Connections Awards Ceremony for recognition of outstanding commuter benefits programs. Bethesda employer GTM Architects received an honorable mention at the 2021 Employer Awards Ceremony.

As part of the Developer Traffic Mitigation Agreements required by MCDOT, BTS provided transportation and commute information to properties in Bethesda. BTS also monitored pedestrian safety concerns associated with construction projects in Bethesda and communicated the information to the public.

BTS worked with MCDOT to promote several new initiatives in 2020-2021, including the County Bike Match program, The Shared Street and Closed Street initiatives, Bethesda adult bicycle education classes, Vision Zero and future separated bicycle lanes in Bethesda. BTS also helped promote Telework webinars in the fall of 2020.

BTS used direct mailing, emails, social media, an e-newsletter and their website to communicate with employers, commuters and property managers. BTS created an electronic “Bethesda Transportation Options” brochure for residential property managers highlighting downtown Bethesda transportation options and a Commuter Tax Credit flyer for employers. The BTS e-newsletter was sent to 3,042 recipients each month.

BTS typically hosts weekly Commuter Information Day events in downtown Bethesda office and residential buildings. Due to the pandemic, these in-person Commuter events were postponed, but BTS continued to manage other events including Car Free Day, the Walk & Ride Challenge and The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce business events. On Car Free Day, which was held September 22, 2020, 3,834 people pledged to consider other transportation modes. Over the course of these various events, BTS usually assists over 2,000 commuters and places more than 25 people into carpools. However, because of the pandemic and the limited number of people commuting to Bethesda, those numbers were reduced.