



2024/25 ANNUAL REVIEW

Bethesda

A world in one neighborhood.

BETHESDA.ORG





From the Executive Director



As we compiled this Annual Report and reflected on this past year, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025, I am filled with gratitude for the dedication and passion displayed by our Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) team. Guided by our Board of Directors, we are pleased to represent a

community of distinct and diverse retailers, restaurants, arts and entertainment venues, and local businesses that make our downtown an exciting and vibrant place. We put our core values of service, stewardship and spark to work every day to help make downtown Bethesda one of the liveliest and best-maintained destinations in the region.

We completed many exciting projects this past year including the installation of a new public art project on 15 Signal Boxes located throughout downtown Bethesda. With the support of the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District, Montgomery County, and our generous sponsors, we were able to greatly enhance these unattractive utility boxes which are now adorned with original designs created by 15 local artists. Additionally, we launched a new website that is more user friendly, reflects our updated branding, and is filled with information on events, downtown Bethesda's restaurants and retailers, and the work of the Bethesda Urban Partnership.

We welcomed thousands of visitors to our downtown this past year to enjoy marquis festivals such as the Taste of Bethesda, Bethesda Fine Arts Festival, Bike to Work Day, Winter Wonderland and more. Weekly activations such as Fitness in the Parks, Yappy Hour and Summer Concerts also provided the perfect atmosphere for gatherings with residents and visitors alike. All of these wonderful events created opportunities for local businesses, showcased our thriving downtown and created a sense of place for our community.

Development has continued to progress in downtown Bethesda with projects such as the Hampden House and Cecil opening, and The Charles coming soon. We continue to promote mobility throughout our downtown by keeping residents, businesses and building owners informed about transportation alternatives, Metro, bike paths, walking options and more. Our maintenance and field operations team kept our downtown looking pristine and beautiful with biannual plantings, tree pruning, trash removal, sidewalk repairs and event day assistance.

Our motto, "A World in One Neighborhood" guides our mission to make Bethesda its best. We will continue to create memorable experiences for our downtown residents and guests, and work to make downtown Bethesda a place where local businesses are flourishing, and residents and visitors are enjoying the best amenities from arts experiences to a robust restaurant and shopping community, and more.

Sincerely,

Jeff Burton, Executive Director
Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.





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From the Board Chair



I am honored to serve as Chair of the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) Board of Directors, an organization I have had the pleasure of being a part of for many years. As I assume the position for the July 2025 - June 2026 term, I would like to thank our community for its continued

support of downtown Bethesda. As a local resident, I am thrilled to lead an organization that creates fun and unique experiences for the community while promoting Bethesda’s many great restaurants, interesting shops, and cultural programming.

The BUP Team has delivered outstanding maintenance, marketing and mobility services since 1994, receiving many accolades from our business, government and community partners for our work in making downtown Bethesda a success. We are fortunate to have amenities for residents, opportunities for businesses, and an unmatched community spirit. You’ve probably seen our dedicated team in red shirts maintaining downtown Bethesda, at our special events and throughout the week. We also help market local businesses, promote transportation alternatives, and have a significant presence on social media to stay connected with our constituents.

Some highlights from the past year include events such as the Taste of Bethesda, Outdoor Movies, Summer Concerts and the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival. Additionally, our public art programs such as the new Signal Box public art project, local galleries, and arts events such as the Bethesda Film Fest make our area culturally rich and provide quality entertainment.

Our five-year Strategic Plan centers around our Vision to maintain and provide a downtown that is a “vibrant hub of community activity for residents, workers, and visitors alike as well as a mixed-use district that is clean, safe, beautiful, walkable and increasingly diverse.” We have outlined in this report the many initiatives, programs, marketing, and special events that have contributed to a successful and engaging downtown experience.

I am grateful for the privilege of working alongside the BUP team and my Board colleagues. We remain dedicated to making Bethesda an exceptional community through our ongoing projects while working to create an even better future for downtown Bethesda and our constituents.

Best regards,
Dan Schlaff, Chair
Bethesda Urban Partnership

Operations & Funding



The Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. (BUP) was established by Montgomery County in 1994 to market and maintain downtown Bethesda. Throughout the last 31 years, BUP's dedicated employees who work in marketing, maintenance and field operations, administration and mobility management have continued to promote and support the beautiful and flourishing downtown.

The BUP team maintains the public spaces in downtown Bethesda and creates initiatives and marketing programs to welcome and engage residents, visitors and artists, as well as promote local businesses.

A vibrant neighborhood within the Greater Washington, D.C. area, Bethesda offers a variety of restaurants, retailers, arts and entertainment venues, and events. BUP's marketing team manages unique and exciting programming, including community festivals and arts events, and highlights the many destinations throughout the downtown. BUP also manages Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS), the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District and the Bethesda Circulator.



Bethesda Urban Partnership Staff

Jeff Burton

Executive Director

Stephanie Coppola

Director of Marketing & Communications

Chiqui Laboy

Office Manager

Jason Liu

Marketing & Events Manager

Jeff Oyer

Director of Finance

Susanna Parker

Marketing & Communications Manager

Emma Q. Zanello

Marketing & Communications Manager





BUP is operated by an eleven-member Board of Directors comprising residents, businesses and developers appointed by the County Executive. The organization is funded primarily by a combination of revenue generated from Bethesda Parking Lot District fees, commercial Urban District property tax, and general fund tax dollars. Private sponsors also partner with BUP on events such as Taste of Bethesda, Summer Concerts and the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival.

Bethesda Circulator

The Bethesda Circulator is a helpful mode of transportation for those looking for an easy and free way around town. In 2025, BUP introduced new red Circulator vehicles reflecting BUP's updated brand identity. The buses are on the route Monday-Friday, 7 am-11pm and Saturday, 10am-11pm. The route services north to Battery Lane and south to Bradley Boulevard and includes 20 stops at popular downtown Bethesda destinations including the Metro, public parking garages, restaurants and shops.



Bethesda Urban Partnership Board of Directors July 2024 – June 2025

Executive Committee

Chair: Dan Schlaff, *Residential Representative from Close Proximity to Urban District*

Vice Chair: Christopher Smith, *Stonebridge Associates, Inc., Optional Method Developer*

Treasurer: Mylene L. Ortiz Luis, *The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce*

Secretary: Adam Murphy, *Mon Ami Gabi, Small Business Representative*

Board Members

Marian Block, *Residential Representative from within the Urban District*

Meagan Donohoe, *The Donohoe Companies, Optional Method Developer*

Jane Fairweather, *The Jane Fairweather Team, The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce*

Katya Marin, *Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board Representative*

TBD, *Residential Representative from Planning Area*

Apoorva Gandhi, *Marriott International, Optional Method Developer*

Peter Fosselman, *Director, Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center (Ex-Officio)*

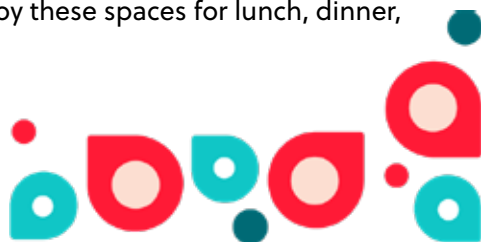


Maintenance



The dedicated BUP Maintenance Team removes trash and recycling, sweeps streets, repairs sidewalks, prunes trees, plants flowers, and more to keep the downtown refreshed and inviting. The beautiful flowers seen along the Wisconsin Avenue median, at downtown Bethesda's gateways, and in the many planters located throughout our downtown are carefully planted and maintained by the BUP team. Their efforts remain vital to maintaining Bethesda's cleanliness and appeal as the downtown area grows.

Additionally, the team is charged with the upkeep and beautification of public gathering spaces in downtown Bethesda including Veterans Park, located at the corner of Norfolk and Woodmont Avenues. Residents and visitors alike enjoy these spaces for lunch, dinner, coffee dates and more.





During FY'25, the maintenance team managed and pruned 1,600 trees, took care of 35,000 flowers and 180,000 sq. ft. of turf, as well as removed trash and litter seven days a week.

The team also assists with on-site needs at BUP events and manages the maintenance tasks 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 through Sunday and can be found around town ready to help downtown guests. The Ambassadors are available to provide emergency assistance, give directions and assist with the downtown's maintenance needs. The team has been an integral part in the operations of BUP's events both big and small from Yappy Hours to Taste of Bethesda.



Maintenance and Ask Me Team Members:

- Eli Banks, Field Operations Manager
- José Castro, Maintenance Supervisor
- John Mattingly, Ask Me Team Supervisor
- Tito Castro, Trash Removal Team
- Datrell Childers, Street Sweeper
- Manuel Constanza, Landscaper
- José Gaitán, Urban Beautification Squad
- Hugo Rolando Archila García, Landscaper
- Jorge Hernandez, Landscaper
- Melvin Muñoz-Macoto, Landscaper
- Celio Peña, Landscaper
- Ronaldo Bonilla Ramos, Ask Me Team
- Marlon Reynolds, Ask Me Team
- Pedro Rodrigues, Trash Removal Team
- Jeron Terrel Russell, Ask Me Team
- Martir Salmeron, Landscaper
- Chris Singleton, Ask Me Team
- Jaime Villanueva, Landscaper
- Felix Villatoro, Landscaper



In Memoriam

Adan Diaz-Reyes
Urban Beautification Squad

In the spring of 2025, the Bethesda Urban Partnership lost a dear friend and colleague, Adan Diaz-Reyes. Adan was with BUP for nearly 25 years, and began his career in 2001 as a member of the Urban Beautification Squad. Adan was a dedicated and loyal individual who made an incredible impact on the Bethesda community and in the many lives he touched. He will be greatly missed.



Marketing



BUP's marketing team is charged with promoting downtown Bethesda as a vibrant destination offering dining, shopping, the arts, and unparalleled amenities for residents and visitors alike. Large-scale festivals, monthly activations and cultural events attract many people to enjoy our community. Our website, www.bethesda.org, e-newsletter, social media posts and free printed guides are all great resources to learn more about the restaurants, retailers, arts venues and events throughout the downtown.



Downtown Bethesda's marquis food festival, the popular **Taste of Bethesda** returned to Woodmont Triangle on October 5, 2024, celebrating its 32nd year. The event featured a look at the rich culinary diversity of the downtown Bethesda restaurant community and hosted more than 25,000 attendees. Festival attendees enjoyed over 40 participating restaurants, eight live bands and an activity area for kids. The festival was made possible with the generous support of the 2024 sponsors including: Suburban Hospital, Amazon Fresh, *Bethesda Magazine*, Pella Mid-Atlantic Windows & Doors and The St. James.





Our love of restaurants continued in the new year with **"Savor Bethesda" Restaurant Week** which was held from February 20-March 2, 2025 featuring great dining deals. Over 40 participating downtown Bethesda eateries curated lunch, dinner and dessert menus at \$10, \$20 or \$35 for dine in and take-out customers. BUP promoted the culinary week, encouraging patrons to check out the deals and support their favorite restaurants. BUP partnered with several media outlets to feature local chefs and restaurant owners to promote the program and bring more attention to our beloved restaurant community.

The free **Friday Summer Concerts** continued into 2025, drawing large crowds who delighted in live music, dining and dancing to kick off the weekend. The summer season started with Elikeh Afropop followed by other popular local groups including Soul Crackers and Potomac Fever for a special Pride Month concert in June.

Free Outdoor Movies returned to Woodmont Triangle for three nights in July and August 2024 featuring major motion pictures in various genres including an action fan favorite, a musical comedy, and a sports comedy-drama.

2024 Taste of Bethesda Participating Restaurants

ala & Beth's	Moby Dick
Avenue Café	Nothing Bundt Cakes
Benihana	The Organic Butcher
Bethesda Chocolates	Original Pancake House
Casa Oaxaca	Pho Viet USA
Ceremony Coffee Roasters	Q by Peter Chang
CHIKO	The Red Bandana Bakery
Cubano's	Rock Bottom Restaurant and Brewery
Delhi Spice	Rooted3
Dog Haus Biergarten	Seventh State Restaurant & Lounge
Fialova	Silver
Fresh Baguette	Smoke BBQ
Georgetown Cupcake	Smoothie King
Guapo's	Spanish Diner
Hawkers Asian Street Food	Tacombi
Just Ice Tea	Tout de Sweet
Kadhai Boutique Indian Cuisine	Tropical Smoothie Café
Kusshi	Virraaj Indian Cuisine
Levain Bakery	World of Beer
Maman	ZAO Stamina Ramen
Medium Rare	
MI Café	





Getting fit is free with **Fitness in the Parks** held in Elm Street Park featuring free classes from downtown Bethesda fitness studios. In June and July, over 250 local residents participated in outdoor classes with Barre3 Bethesda, Corepower Yoga, Salsa with Silvia, Nesfield Performance, and Orangetheory Fitness Bethesda. After class, participants could learn more about the studios, get sign-up discounts, and take home some custom swag.



On August 6, 2024, BUP partnered with Montgomery County Police, Bethesda District as well as Montgomery County Fire and Rescue, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services, and The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce for **National Night Out!** This nationwide event is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live. Attendees enjoyed free activities, mini golf, a moon bounce, face painting and balloon artists, live music from Ocho de Bastos and more. Participating restaurants Smoke BBQ and Carmen's Italian Ice served up delicious treats for everyone to enjoy.

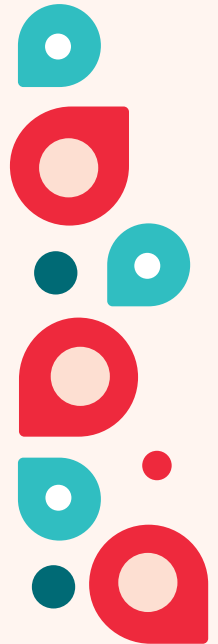




In partnership with Montgomery Parks, BUP hosted **Yappy Hour and Pop-Up Dog Parks** at Elm Street Park in July, September and October of 2024. BUP's maintenance team built play areas for both large and small dogs on each side of the park's plaza. This allowed dogs to freely run and play while their owners could listen to music from local bands like Swing5 and enjoy food from Smoke BBQ. Local pet retailers like Bone Jour, Wag N' Wash and Dogtopia also joined in the Yappy Hour events with fun activities and giveaways. A special treat was the artist who drew caricatures of participating dogs!

On Friday, May 23, 2025, **FOX 5 DC** kicked off their summer **Zip Trips** in downtown Bethesda! BUP had a blast along with some local restaurants, retailers, high school students, community VIPs and more. The Zip Trip was made special by all the featured Bethesda businesses: Barre3, Bethesda Chocolates, Gringos & Mariachis, The Red Bandana Bakery, Ruta and Salsa with Silvia, plus Amy Daum, Commander, Montgomery County Police, 2nd District and Jeff Burton, Executive Director, Bethesda Urban Partnership. Media opportunities like this showcase the diversity and quality of the people and businesses that make up the fabric of downtown Bethesda.

BUP continued its support of restaurants and retailers with the **E-gift card "Bethesda Bucks."** The Bethesda Bucks program continued to grow, with over 60 retail and restaurant participating locations and selling \$8,500 worth of gift cards used at local establishments.



2025 Local Writer's Showcase

Essay Winners

Sarah Craven, *Cabin John, MD, 1st Place*

Kathy Wei, *Bethesda, MD, 2nd Place*

Lisa Park, *Fairfax, VA, 3rd Place*

Kyi May Kaung, *Chevy Chase, MD, Honorable Mention*

Celina Santana, *Bethesda, MD, Honorable Mention*

Lindsey Wray, *Arlington, VA, Honorable Mention*

High School Essay Winners

Logan Moran, *Bethesda-Chevy Chase H.S., 1st Place*

Caroline Easley, *Walt Whitman H.S., 2nd Place*

Michaela Levy, *Winston Churchill H.S., 3rd Place*

Marin Brow, *The Potomac School, Honorable Mention*

Eleham Salo, *Bethesda-Chevy Chase H.S., Honorable Mention*

Katja Treadwell, *Walt Whitman H.S., Honorable Mention*

Short Story Winners

Asma Dilawari, *Bethesda, MD, 1st Place*

Laura Kuhlmann, *Rockville, MD, 2nd Place*

John Simpson, *Germantown, MD, 3rd Place*

Olivia Ikenberry, *Silver Spring, MD, Honorable Mention*

High School Short Story Winners

Max Bakelar, *Georgetown Prep, 1st Place*

Hana Sor, *Montgomery Blair H.S., 2nd Place*

Asha Akkinipally, *Richard Montgomery H.S., 3rd Place*

Lila Grosko, *Montgomery Blair H.S., Honorable Mention*

Poetry Winners

John Whelan, *Columbia, MD, 1st Place*

John Heath, *Washington, D.C., 2nd Place*

Chelsea McGlynn, *Walkersville, MD, 3rd Place*

Carol Jennings, *Washington, D.C., Honorable Mention*

Thu Nguyen, *Gaithersburg, MD, Honorable Mention*

Dylan Tran, *Washington, D.C., Honorable Mention*

High School Poetry Winners

Leah Bulson, *Richard Montgomery H.S., Young Poet Award*

Cloe Chang, *Poolesville H.S., Young Poet Award*

M Downs, *Richard Montgomery H.S., Young Poet Award*

Charles Gray, *Richard Montgomery H.S., Young Poet Award*

Katherine Parra, *Paint Branch H.S., Young Poet Award*

Nina Richards, *Richard Montgomery H.S., Young Poet Award*

Bethesda's Winter Wonderland was held on Saturday, December 7, 2024, drawing big crowds of families, local singers and more. The celebration featured festive choral performances from Academy of the Holy Cross, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, Chevy Chase Elementary School, Georgetown Prep, Stone Ridge School, Strathmore Children's Chorus, Walter Johnson High School, and Young Artists of America. The event also featured a live ice sculpting presentation, face painting, and a special appearance from Santa Claus. Children were able to participate in free crafting stations from local theatres, Imagination Stage and Round House Theatre, while all attendees enjoyed food and beverages from The Red Bandana Bakery and Smoke BBQ. New to the 2024 Winter Wonderland, a holiday market presented by URBNmarket featuring over 40 local artisans.

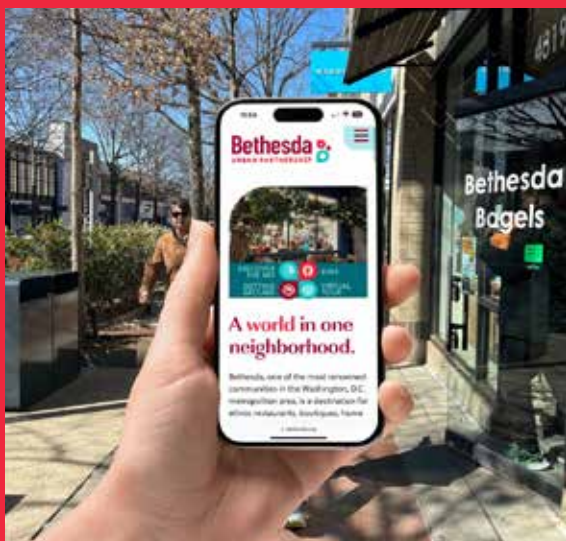
The 2025 **Local Writer's Showcase** celebrated writers from Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia with two readings and award ceremonies. More than 700 entries were submitted for the Bethesda Essay, Short Story and Poetry Contests. Thirty-three writers were acknowledged, with over \$5,000 in prize money distributed. Additionally, top prize winners received classes and memberships to The Writer's Center, along with having their work published in *Bethesda Magazine*.



On March 13, 2025, the Poetry Awards and Reading took place at The Writer's Center, featuring readings by this year's winners and guest poets Alexa Patrick and Courtney LeBlanc (2025 Poetry Contest Judge). The Showcase continued on March 14th at The Bethesdan Hotel with the Essay and Short Story Reading, showcasing this year's winners.

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 serves as a valuable resource for information about Bethesda, offering restaurant and retail guides, upcoming event details and more. In March 2025, Bethesda unveiled a **redesigned website** with a new look and layout. The new website makes it easier for visitors to find information on restaurants, shops, art galleries, theaters and more. Plus, all our special events and Arts & Entertainment programming as well as information on downtown Bethesda are simple to navigate and important details are easily accessible.

Through Social Media, BUP shares both BUP-specific and downtown Bethesda updates, as well as promotion of local retailers and restaurants on Instagram, Facebook, X and LinkedIn. In 2024 and 2025, a key focus was the use of short videos to spotlight downtown Bethesda's local businesses, restaurants and retailers as well as Bethesda Urban Partnership initiatives. These videos gained significant traction, garnering over 250,000 views and were reshared across thousands of accounts. Additionally, we saw an increase of 30% in our social media following. Moreover, the weekly e-newsletter serves as an essential tool for those seeking up-to-date information on what's happening in downtown Bethesda. The newsletter continues to grow its following and has a current total of over 15,000 subscribers.



facebook.com/BethesdaUp

[@BethesdaUp](https://twitter.com/BethesdaUp)

[@BethesdaBup](https://instagram.com/BethesdaBup)





Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District

Downtown Bethesda was officially designated as an Arts & Entertainment District by the state of Maryland starting July 1, 2002, and was redesignated on July 1, 2022. This designation provides special tax incentives that support artists, arts organizations, and developers within the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District.

The Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District curates top-tier arts, cultural events and programs that enrich the lives of residents, businesses, and visitors, while fostering community growth and vitality. The A&E events showcase the talents of local artists, writers, filmmakers and performers, offering them platforms to present their work to the community. These initiatives not only spotlight Bethesda's artistic and cultural assets but also attract nearly 1,000 artists and over 30,000 annual event attendees.



**Bethesda Arts & Entertainment
Board of Directors
July 2024 – June 2025**

Executive Committee

President: Jane Fairweather
Jane Fairweather Team/Long & Foster
Vice President: Jad Donohoe
The Donohoe Companies
Secretary/Treasurer: Patrick O'Neil
Lerch, Early & Brewer

Board Members

Bonnie Fogel, *Imagination Stage*
Richard Greenberg, *Greenhill Companies*
Bob Hebda, *Local Resident*
Geoff Sharpe, *Federal Realty Investment Trust*
Janet Shatz, *Local Artist*
Robin Sherman, *Local Resident*
Wendy Susswein, *Local Resident*
Peter Fosselman (Non-voting), *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center*

Continuing efforts to “Paint the Town” with public art and public mural projects, the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District decorated 15 downtown Bethesda signal boxes with original designs from local artists. Over 250 artists applied for consideration, and 15 were selected including two local high school students.

This project could not have happened without the support of the Arts & Entertainment Board, the project sponsors, and of course, the artists who helped us bring their vision to life. Enjoy the newest addition to the art scene of downtown Bethesda on your next walk, drive, or bike around downtown.

We are incredibly grateful to the project sponsors who supported this initiative: Amy Kaslow Gallery, Avocet Towers Investors, Bethesda Chevy-Chase Regional Services Center, Bethesda Systems, Cherian and Catherine Thomas, The Donohoe Companies, EYA LLC, The Greenhill Companies, Host Hotels & Resorts, Jane Fairweather Team, Laurence Cafritz Builders, Montgomery County Police, and Lerch, Early & Brewer.

BUP manages Gallery B, a nonprofit art gallery that features monthly exhibits by regional artists. The spring 2025 exhibit schedule began with “Moving Forward,” by returning group Ch/Art, Inc. The lineup also included “Gallery 322 at Gallery B” featuring Gallery 322 of Frederick, MD as well as exhibit “Patterns, Patchwork, Origami: Sculptural and Relief Paintings” a show curated by Morton Fine Art. In May, Black Art Today returned to Gallery B with “Turning Tides” Action Resilience, and the Mental Landscapes of Black and Brown Voices,” which featured the work of nearly 40 Black artists.

In addition, BUP oversees Studio B and Triangle Art Studios, providing studio spaces that serve as both workspaces and exhibition venues for local artists. Studio B showcases the works of Linda Bartley Button, Shanthi Chandrasekar, Sara Leibman, and Gloria Solomon. At Triangle Art Studios, visitors can explore the works of Maruja Quezada, Barb Siegel, and Stephen Estrada. Additionally, Triangle Art Studios includes a gallery space that exhibits artworks by guest artists.



Signal Box Artists

Liliane Blom, Rockville, MD
Nico Borelli, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School
Ellen Byrne, Frederick, MD
Lea Craigie-Marshall, Brunswick, MD
Rosa Cruglez, Virginia Beach, VA
Michelle Herman, Washington, D.C.
Amy Kaslow, Bethesda, MD
Alexis Limpiado, Gaithersburg, MD
Adrian Loving, Washington, D.C.
Johathan Monaghan, Washington, D.C.
Rashad Ali Muhammad, Clinton, MD
Rodrigo Pradel, Reston, VA
Francis Sullivan, Bethesda, MD
Sora Walker, Georgetown Day School
Nick Zimbardo, Woodbridge, VA





Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District



2025 Bethesda Film Fest Films

Back to the Sky, film by Amin El Siwi of Washington, D.C.

Black Printmakers of Washington, D.C.
Percy B. Martin and Michael B. Platt,
film by Susan Goldman of Rockville, MD

DelMar, film by Lucy Morales Carlisle
of Rockville, MD

Dora Fugh Lee: A Life in Art,
film by E. Samantha Cheng of Silver Spring, MD

Monument, film by Jeremy Drummond of
Richmond, VA

Moon Crab, film by Leah Claire Michaels of
Baltimore, MD



The **Bethesda Art Walk** returned for four nights spanning the fall of 2024 and the spring of 2025 and saw an outstanding attendance. Participating galleries included: Amy Kaslow Gallery, Artworks Fine Arts Studio, Gallery B, Studio B, Triangle Art Studios and the Waverly Street Gallery.

In 2025, Bethesda welcomed back the cherished event, **Play In A Day!** Six esteemed theatre companies from the area collaborated to write, direct, rehearse, and perform original plays centered around common themes in just 24 hours. Play In A Day was held on Saturday, March 8, 2025 at Imagination Stage.



Play In A Day kicked off on Friday evening, March 7 when playwrights and directors joined together to receive their assigned themes and props. The event featured local theatre groups Adventure Theatre MTC (Glen Echo, MD); Flying V (Bethesda, MD); Imagination Stage (Bethesda, MD); The Keegan Theatre (Washington, D.C.); Olney Theatre (Olney, MD) and Rorschach Theatre (Washington, D.C.).

The 13th annual **Bethesda Film Fest** featured six short documentaries made by local filmmakers. The selected films were screened on April 4 and 5, 2025. This year's venue, the Bethesda Row Landmark Cinema, greatly elevated the festival for the filmmakers and attendees alike with its widescreen, high quality sound and professional cinema experience. Each screening was followed by a Q&A session with the filmmakers, moderated by Andrea Passafiume, documentary filmmaker and producer. The Bethesda Film Fest was supported by Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services, Arlene Begelman, The Donohoe Companies, Jane Fairweather Team, Bonnie Fogel, The Greenhill Companies, Robert Hebda, Amy Kaslow Gallery, Geoff Sharpe, Robin Sherman, Wendy Susswein, and Lerch, Early and Brewer.





Bethesda Fine Arts Festival

Best in Show Winner

Kathryn Maher, Painting

Judges' Choice Award Winners

Christopher Falck – Photography

Hannah Long – Jewelry

Lisa Zolandz – Ceramics

Michael Nemnich – Printmaking

Robin Kittleson – Glass

Susan Darrow – Photography



The 20th annual **Bethesda Fine Arts Festival** took place on Saturday, May 10 and Sunday, May 11, 2025, in Bethesda's Woodmont Triangle along Norfolk and Auburn Avenues. As one of downtown Bethesda's premier events, this festival attracts over 20,000 attendees annually who come to explore and purchase original fine art created by over 100 of the nation's most skilled artists. Artists were selected through a jury process to participate in the festival, and their artwork includes painting, photography, jewelry, sculpture, furniture, glass, ceramic, wood and more. Festival-goers enjoyed live music and had the opportunity to indulge in cuisine from downtown Bethesda restaurants while immersing themselves in a diverse array of original artwork.

The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards final exhibit was on display at Gallery B September 5-29, 2024. The eight finalists were selected from nearly 400 applicants by the following artists and art educators: **Dr. Jennifer Figg**, Professor of Art at Townson University; **Tatiana Flores**, Professor of Art History, University of Virginia; and **David Page**, Sculptor-in-Residence, American University and 2004 Trawick Prize winner.

In June 2025, the 21st annual Bethesda Painting Awards, also founded by Bethesda resident Carol Trawick, was held at Gallery B from June 6-29, 2025. Eight finalists were selected by the competition's panel made up of **Kevin Mitchell**, Lecturer of Studio Art at The Catholic University of America; **Mary Proenza**, Associate Professor of Art at Marymount University; and **James Williams II**, Professor of Painting at Maryland Institute College of Art.



2024 Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards Winners

\$10,000 Best in Show

Pedro Ledesma III, Alexandria, VA

\$2,000 Second Place

Scott Pennington, Baltimore, MD

\$1,000 Third Place

James Terrell, Washington, D.C.

\$1,000 Young Artist

Paloma Vianey, Washington, D.C.



2025 Bethesda Painting Awards Winners

\$10,000 Best in Show

Elaine S. Wilson, Silver Spring, MD

\$2,000 Second Place

Mason Owens, Baltimore, MD

\$1,000 Third Place

Anna Child, Baltimore, MD

\$1,000 Young Artist

Malik Greene, Alexandria, VA





MOBILITY

Bethesda Transportation Solutions

Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS) helps 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 multimodal transportation such as rail, bus, carpools, walking and biking with the goal of reducing the number of Bethesda employees and residents who drive alone to work.

Each year BTS hosts one of the largest **Bike to Work Day** events in the Washington, D.C. region, and had nearly 400 registrants. Several local businesses and organizations were onsite at the event including: BellRinger, Bethesda Bike and Ski, Bethesda Green, Cheltenham Interiors, Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, Custom Ink, Griffin Cycle, Montgomery County Ride On, Montgomery County Planning Department, Pedego Electric Bikes Bethesda, Potomac Pedalers, Silver and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Baked goods, beverages and treats were donated by Bethesda Bagels, Silver, Just Ice Tea and DrinkMore Water. Prizes were donated by Custom Ink, Griffin Cycle, HotWorx, Mon Ami Gabi, OneLife Fitness and Pedego Electric Bikes. One registrant won a bicycle and another cyclist won a generous gift card to a local bike shop. BTS gave a bike commuting award to a dedicated Bethesda bike convoy leader for over 20 years, Jennifer Longsworth.



The **Walk & Ride Challenge** tasks participants, including teleworkers, to incorporate walking into their day and they were asked to record their steps. The top three teams for 2024 were from the employer B.F. Saul Company (two teams) and The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Individual participants also competed in weekly challenges to win prizes, including a “Bethesda Bucks” gift card. On **Car Free Day** on September 23, 2024, there were 4,064 pledges by commuters to consider other transportation modes that day. A survey showed that 27.8% of participants indicated they normally use a single occupancy vehicle, but opted to go car-free because of the event.

The **BTS Cool Commute Photo Contest** was held in early 2025 and encourages commuters to walk and bicycle to work during winter months. Participants provided positive feedback again this year, stating that they walked and biked more often, and loved that we selected seven winners. Additionally, in 2024-2025, BTS worked with Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to host two **Bicycle Safety Classes** in downtown Bethesda. BTS also hosts a transportation event for Earth Month every April. In 2025, the **Cycle to a Signal Box** contest was created for Earth Month, with participants submitting selfie photos of their bicycle rides to new artwork installed on traffic signal boxes in downtown Bethesda. Four winners each received “Bethesda Bucks” as a prize.

BTS hosts weekly **outreach events** in Bethesda and also participates in downtown Bethesda festivals. Over the course of these various events, BTS usually assists over 2,000 commuters annually.

The BTS team connected with employers at several Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce events 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. In 2024, BTS, along with MCDOT, was recognized regionally by receiving the “Employer Services Outreach Team Achievement Award” for outstanding work with employers and commuters.

As part of the Developer Traffic Mitigation Agreements and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plans required by MCDOT, **BTS provided transportation and commuter information** to commercial and residential properties in Bethesda. BTS also assists Bethesda employers in filing their TDM Plans and participating in the County commuter survey. BTS monitored pedestrian safety concerns associated with construction projects in Bethesda, and communicated the information to the public.

BTS worked with MCDOT and MDOT to promote several initiatives and updates in 2024-2025, including the MCDOT Commuter Survey, the County FareShare transit subsidy program, County-wide adult bicycle education classes, Ride On service changes and zero fare policy starting in 2025, and MDOT Purple Line updates.



Bethesda Transportation Solutions Staff

Kristen Blackmon, *Director*

Marcus Johnson, *Marketing & Outreach Manager*

Allison Kemp, *Customer Service*

BTS Advisory Committee

Nominated by The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce:

Erika Dickstein, *Spring Insight Marketing*

Juliana Stein, *Barre3 Bethesda*

Carla Young (Chair), *The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce*

Nominated by the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board:

Thomas Clash, Bethesda, MD

Steven Teitelbaum, Bethesda, MD

Gregory Tullis, Bethesda, MD

Katie Wagner, Bethesda, MD

Appointed by BUP – Bethesda Employer with 50 or More Employees:

Sal Attanasio, *Councilor, Buchanan & Mitchell*

Brian Goldblatt, *The Donohoe Companies*

Appointed by BUP – Bethesda Employer with Fewer than 50 Employees

John Antokas, *Metro Transportation Management & Design*

Claire Harshbarger, *First National Bank*

Non-Voting Members

James Carlson, *Montgomery County Department of Transportation*

Sean Cullinane, *National Institutes of Health*

Commander Amy Daum, *2D Commander Montgomery County Police*

Peter Fosselman, *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center*

Dan Schlaff, *Bethesda Urban Partnership*

Iftin Thompson, *Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission*



Bethesda

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