



2025/26 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, 2025 to June 30, 2026, I am filled with gratitude for the dedication and passion displayed by our Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) team. 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. Guided by our dedicated Board of Directors, BUP has the pleasure of making downtown Bethesda the best urban area for residents, local businesses, visual and performing artists, and visitors.

It was a big year for new business, restaurants and retail in downtown Bethesda with over 50 new businesses opening their doors. New to the restaurant scene, Babycat Brewery opened its second Montgomery County location in downtown Bethesda in October 2025. We also welcomed restaurants Call Your Mother Deli, Sweeteria, Rosetta and The Food Market. Retail newcomers Lidl, Johnnie O, Sephora and Alo added to our growing list of retailers, and Emma's Art Studio and Kidscreate Studio have enhanced our arts education scene.

We've continued our focus on public art and enhancing public spaces in downtown Bethesda with the redo of the mural located on the Montgomery County public parking garage at 8216 Woodmont Avenue. This mural had suffered significant water damage over the years, and with the help of Montgomery County, that damage has been fixed and mural artist Megan Lewis (Urbanhipsta) of Baltimore, MD returned to downtown Bethesda and created a wonderful new piece of public art to enhance the garage and streetscape of Woodmont Avenue.

New and relocating residents can enjoy the new state-of-the-art apartment buildings, The Charles and Hampden House, both located on Wisconsin Avenue and each offering over 300 individual units. Livability and walkability continue to be significant assets to downtown Bethesda, and we know these new residents will enjoy all that we have to offer close to home.

We welcomed thousands of visitors to our downtown this past year to enjoy marquis festivals such as the Taste of Bethesda, the 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.

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 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 are committed to creating memorable experiences for downtown residents and visitors while fostering a thriving community where local businesses flourish and everyone can enjoy the best of Bethesda. From a vibrant arts and cultural scene to a diverse restaurant and shopping community, we work to make downtown Bethesda a welcoming, dynamic destination with something for everyone.

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 2026 - June 2027 term, I would like to thank our community for its continued support of

downtown Bethesda. We are very fortunate to have a BUP team that has delivered outstanding maintenance, marketing and mobility services since 1994, receiving many accolades from our business, government and community partners for our work in downtown Bethesda.

Our five-year Strategic Plan centers around our Mission to "Create an environment, experience, and economy in which downtown Bethesda businesses, residents, and visitors can thrive and prosper." As such, our team is working hard every day to make downtown Bethesda the best downtown in our region with a focus on livability, economic viability and a vibrancy that is unmatched by our competition.

Downtown Bethesda is filled with amenities for residents, opportunities for businesses, and a lively atmosphere welcoming to everyone. We've had the opportunity to

see our downtown evolve from a small suburb into an exciting urban community that offers great restaurants, unique shops, cultural programming and a place many residents and businesses call home.

We also work closely with 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 festivals and events attracting hundreds of thousands of people to our wonderful downtown to enjoy activities such as the Taste of Bethesda, Outdoor Movies, Summer Concerts and the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival.

Additionally, the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District has also made our downtown a vibrant place filled with public murals, artistic signal boxes, local galleries, theaters and arts events making our area culturally rich and providing quality entertainment close to home.

I am grateful for the privilege of working alongside the BUP team and my Board colleagues. We remain dedicated to the success of our downtown through our efforts in promoting local businesses, creating a sense of place for our residents and visitors, and maintaining a clean, colorful and well-manicured downtown.

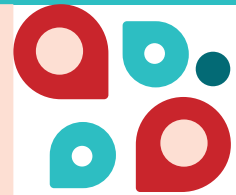
Best regards,

Christopher Smith, 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 32 years, BUP's dedicated employees who work in marketing, maintenance and field operations, administration and mobility management have continued to promote and support the vibrant and flourishing downtown.



The BUP team maintains public spaces, promotes local businesses, produces frequent activations and manages placemaking programs that welcome residents and visitors alike.

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 as well as the art spaces Gallery B, Studio B and Triangle Art Studios.

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

Bethesda Urban Partnership Staff

Jeff Burton

Executive Director

Stephanie Coppula

Director of Marketing & Communications

Jeff Oyer

Director of Finance & Operations

Jason Liu

Marketing & Events Manager

Susanna Parker

Marketing & Communications Manager

Emma Q. Zanello

Marketing & Communications Manager





Bethesda Urban Partnership Board of Directors July 2026-June 2027

Executive Committee

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

Vice Chair: Adam Murphy, Mon Ami Gabi, Small Business Representative

Treasurer: Christina Rodousakis, Residential Representative from Planning Area

Secretary: Meagan Donohoe, The Donohoe Companies, Optional Method Developer

Board Members

Marian Block, Residential Representative from within the Urban District

Stacy Cohen, Marriott International, Optional Method Developer Representative

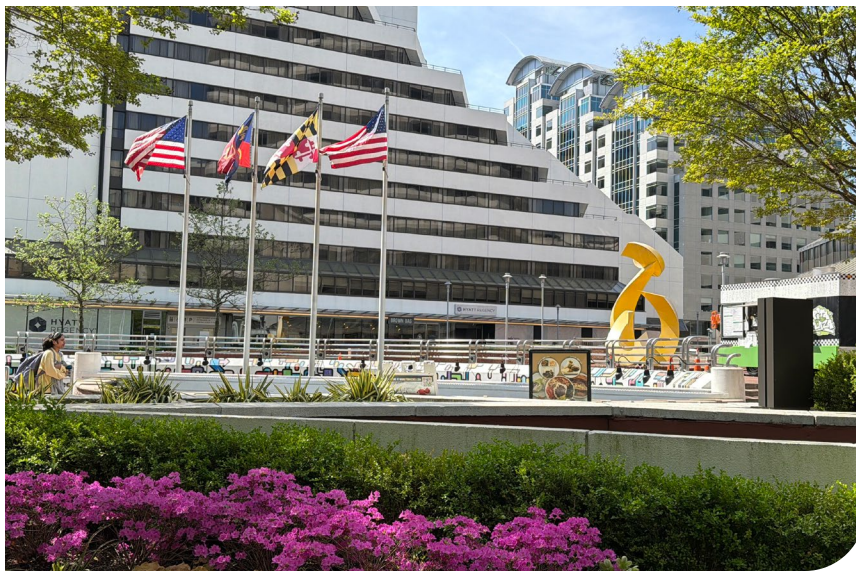
Jane Fairweather, The Jane Fairweather Team, The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce Representative

Katya Marin, Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board Representative

Monique Sanfuentes, Suburban Hospital / Johns Hopkins Medicine, The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce Representative

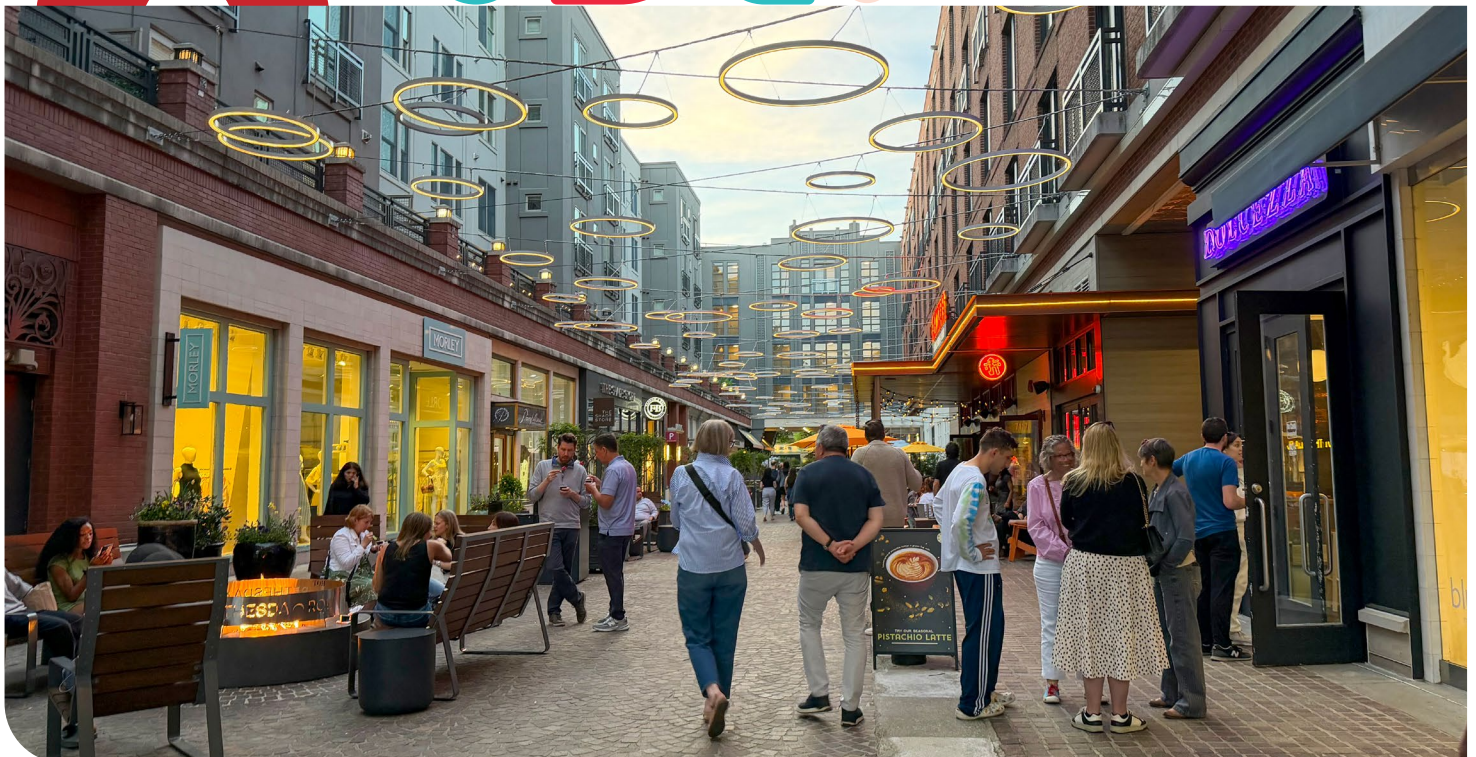
Dan Schlaff, Residential Representative from Close Proximity to Urban District

T.J. Dant, Acting Director, Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center (Ex-Officio)



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, 7am-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.



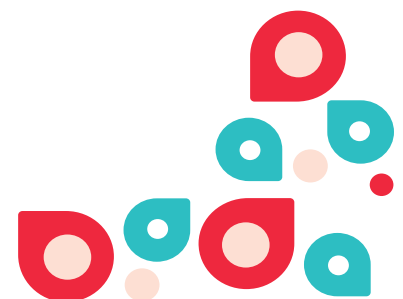


Maintenance

The dedicated BUP Maintenance Team removes trash and recycling, sweeps streets, repairs sidewalks, prunes trees, plants flowers, and more to beautify downtown Bethesda and sustain our vibrancy known throughout the region. 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'26, 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 – 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. The team plays a vital role in managing inventories such as trash and recycling cans, county lights, county crosswalks and more.



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*

Melvin Muñoz-Macoto, *Landscaper*

Rodolfo Villaran Paredes, *Landscaper*

Celio Peña, *Landscaper*

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*





Marketing



BUP's marketing team is charged with promoting downtown Bethesda as the ideal destination offering dining, shopping, the arts, walkability 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 4, 2025, celebrating it's 33rd 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 50 participating restaurants, eight live bands and an activity area for kids. The festival was made possible with the generous support of the 2025 sponsors including: Amazon Fresh, *Bethesda Magazine*, Pella Mid-Atlantic Windows, & Doors, Citibank and The Banner Montgomery.





2025 Taste of Bethesda Participating Restaurants

Agora	Hawkers Asian	Pho Viet USA
ala & Beth's	Street Food	Pike El Diamante
Aventino Cucina/ AP Pizza Shop	Just Ice Tea	Pisco y Nazca
Babycat Brewery	Kadhai	Puree Juice Bar
Benihana	Kusshi	Q by Peter Chang
Bethesda Chocolates	Levain Bakery	Ramen Menri
California Tortilla	Mamma Lucia	The Red Bandana Bakery
Casa Oaxaca	Max's Best Ice Cream	Ruta
Ceremony Coffee	Medium Rare	Seventh State
Roasters	MI Café	Silver
Delhi Spice	Moby Dick House of Kabob	Smoke BBQ
DIG INN	Mon Ami Gabi	Smoothie King
Dog Haus	Nothing Bundt Cakes	Tasty Grills & Catering
Eat Sprout	The Organic Butcher	Tatte Bakery & Café
Georgetown Cupcake	The Original Velatis	Teazzi Tea Shop
Guapo's	Papa John's Pizza	Tout de Sweet
Guardado's	Paris Baguette	Tropical Smoothie Café
	Passage To India	World of Beer



A beloved tradition, **"Bethesda's Best Bite"** competition returned to Taste of Bethesda with an expert panel of judges including Kathleen Neary of *Bethesda Magazine*, Jennifer Delgado of FOX 5 DC and Alex Tsironis of The MoCo Show, along with Bethesda Urban Partnership's Executive Director, Jeff Burton. The winning restaurants of "Bethesda's Best Bite" were Seventh State, Eat Sprout, Ruta and Kadhai with tasty dishes like cream of crab soup, chicken makhani and a harvest salad.

Our love of restaurants continued in the new year with **"Savor Bethesda" Restaurant Week** which was held from Feb. 19-March 1, 2026 featuring great dining deals. Over 40 participating downtown Bethesda eateries curated lunch, dinner and dessert menus at \$10, \$20 or \$35. 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 2026, drawing large crowds who delighted in live music, dining and dancing to kick off the weekend. The summer season started with Jill Fulton Band followed by other popular local groups including Soul Crackers and 19th Street Band.



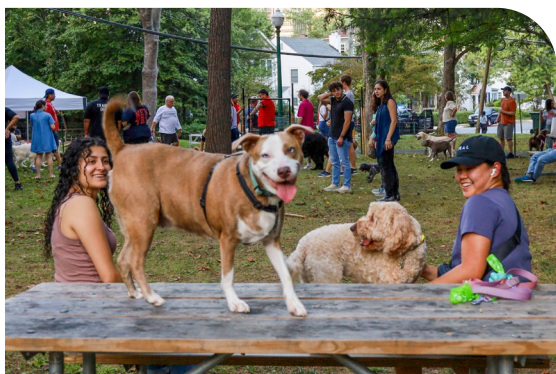


Bethesda Outdoor Movies moved to County Parking Lot 24, behind the Farm Women's Market, for the 2025 summer season. The new location boasts ample parking and more space for more attendees to enjoy a free movie in downtown Bethesda. Featured movies included *A Complete Unknown*, *Akeelah and the Bee* and *500 Days of Summer*. Silver and Clayboy's joined the event to provide food, beverages and a sweet treat.

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

On August 5, 2025, 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 games and activities, face painting, live music from Ocho de Bastos and more. Participating restaurants Olazzo, Max's Best Ice Cream and Carmen's Italian Ice served up delicious eats.





In partnership with Montgomery Parks, BUP hosted **Yappy Hour and Pop-Up Dog Parks** at Elm Street Park in July, September and October of 2025. BUP's maintenance team built play areas for both large and small dogs. Dogs ran freely and played while their owners listened to live music from local performers like Angie Miller and enjoyed food from downtown Bethesda restaurants Smoke BBQ and Silver. Local pet retailers Bone Jour, Livewell Animal Hospital, Benson Animal Hospital, Bethesda Doghouse and Bond Vet also joined in the Yappy Hours. A special treat was fun Polaroid photos of participants and their pups to take home.

BUP remained active in 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.

Bethesda's Winter Wonderland was held on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025, drawing big crowds of families, local singers and more. The celebration featured festive choral performances from Academy of the Holy Cross, Bethesda Elementary, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, Chevy Chase Elementary School, Georgetown Prep, Our Lady of Lourdes, Stone Ridge School and Strathmore Youth Chorus. 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, as well as an onsite scavenger hunt with Encrypted Escape Bethesda. All attendees were able to enjoy food and beverages from The Red Bandana Bakery, Olazzo and Smoke BBQ. Returning for the second year to Winter Wonderland, a holiday market presented by URBNmarket featuring over 50 local artisans.



The 2026 **Local Writer's Showcase** celebrated writers from D.C., MD and VA with two readings and award ceremonies. More than 700 entries were submitted for the Bethesda Essay, Short Story and Poetry Contests. Thirty-eight 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*.

The Showcase began on Friday, March 13 at The Bethesdan Hotel with the Essay and Short Story Awards and Readings, showcasing this year's winners. On March 18, 2026, the Poetry Awards and Reading took place in person at The Writer's Center, featuring readings by this year's winners, the 2026 Poetry Contest Judge Alexa Patrick, and guest poet Douglas Powell/Roscoe Burnems.

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.



2026 Local Writer's Showcase

Essay Winners

Joyce Siegel, Rockville, MD, 1st Place

Kristin O'Keefe, Kensington, MD,
2nd Place

Diego Tovar, Chevy Chase, MD, 3rd Place

Honorable Mention

Joy Einstein, Bethesda, MD

Holly Mason Badra, Clifton, VA

Tara Prakash, Chevy Chase, MD

High School Essay Winners

Nolan Chen, Poolesville HS, 1st Place

Nila Amin, Walter Johnson HS, 2nd Place

Annabel Taylor, Walt Whitman HS,
3rd Place

Honorable Mention

Abigail Araya, Thomas S. Wootton HS

Andrea Chen, Thomas S. Wootton HS

Cooper Greg, Walt Whitman HS

Anesu Pimhidzai, Winston Churchill HS

Short Story Winners

Michael Norton, Silver Spring, MD,
1st Place

Aniko Albert, Rockville, MD, 2nd Place

Sarah Boone, Silver Spring, MD, 3rd Place

Honorable Mention

Bob Greenberg, Bethesda, MD

Naomi Walker, Silver Spring, MD

Erica Clark, Silver Spring, MD

High School Short Story Winners

Ainsley MacSarrow, Winston Churchill
HS, 1st Place

Midori Golike, Bethesda-Chevy Chase
HS, 2nd Place

Sean Carvin, James Hubert Blake HS,
3rd Place

Honorable Mention

Rey Landoll, Richard Montgomery HS

Leah DMello, Bullis School

Evie Hall, Richard Montgomery HS

Poetry Winners

Thu Nguyen, Gaithersburg, MD, 1st Place

Tara Prakash, Chevy Chase, MD, 2nd Place

Chioma Urama, Lorton, VA, 3rd Place

Honorable Mention

Hania Qutub, Vienna, VA

Marina Ruben, Washington, D.C.

Charlotte Clymer, Washington, D.C.

High School Poetry Winners

Eve Browne, Thomas S. Wootton HS

Jacy Duan, Richard Montgomery HS

Lily Gough, Poolesville HS

Shibani Mishra, Richard Montgomery

Evvaleen Robinson, Montgomery Blair HS

Mina Simon-Ogan, Montgomery Blair HS

Annabel Taylor, Walt Whitman HS

Online and Social Media

Through social media, BUP shares both BUP-specific and downtown Bethesda updates, as well as promotes local retailers and restaurants on Instagram, Facebook, X and LinkedIn. In 2025 and 2026, a key focus was the use of short videos to spotlight Bethesda Urban Partnership initiatives, as well as downtown Bethesda's local businesses, restaurants and retailers. These videos gained significant traction, garnering over half a million views and were shared by thousands of followers. As a result, we saw an increase of 20% in our social media followers in 2026. Additionally, our weekly e-newsletter serves as an essential tool for those seeking up-to-date information on what's happening in downtown Bethesda and continues to grow its following with over 20,000 subscribers.



facebook.com/BethesdaUp

@BethesdaUp

@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.

Continuing efforts to **"Paint the Town"** with public mural projects, the Bethesda Arts & Entertainment district invited muralist Megan Lewis of Baltimore, MD to return to repaint and refresh the mural on the Woodmont/Rugby Garage. The parking garage required structural repairs for water damage that had also damaged the integrity of the mural. Now the garage features a fully refreshed mural, "The Commute" that was completed in April 2026.

Bethesda Arts & Entertainment Board of Directors July 2026 – June 2027

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

Ellen Coren, *Chesapeake Public Strategies*

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*

T. J. Dant (Non-voting), *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center*



Since 2011, BUP has managed **Gallery B**, a nonprofit art gallery that features monthly exhibits by regional artists. This past year's featured exhibitions included *Survivorship: Serenity* by Felicia Reed; *Color + Light, Part Two* by Jennifer Houward and Kathleen Byrnes and in *What Lies Beneath* by Chris Chernow, Beth Curren and Carolee Jakes. In January 2026, Gallery B featured *Beyond the Canvas: Art as Inspiration* featuring the works of Blair G. Ewing High School students and alumni. The Blair G. Ewing Center is MCPS's Alternative Education Program, designed to support students with various learning and social emotional needs who have been unsuccessful in their home schools for a variety of reasons.

ImagineEarth Collective featured *A Persistent Nature* in April 2026 and the National Capital Art Glass Guild returned in May with *The Language of Glass*. Gallery B was thrilled to welcome the Friends of the Yellow Barn Studio at Glen Echo and their *27th Annual High School Exhibition* which featured the works of 41 high school art students from Montgomery County.



BUP also 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. In June 2026, Triangle Art Studios welcomed Alexis Limpiado for a solo exhibition, *Watercolors on Wee Hours*.

The **Bethesda Art Walk** returned for four nights spanning the fall of 2025 and the spring of 2026 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.



2026 Bethesda Film Fest Films

A Score in Absence, film by Max Rykov of Potomac, MD

Bay to Baltimore, film by Camila De Ilhéus & Samantha Mitchell of Baltimore, MD

Jacob Kainen: The Last Expression, film by Jon Gann of Washington, D.C.

Kil & the Kids, film by Ethan Baker of Washington, D.C.

The Danger of Disclosure, film by Carolyn McCulley of Brambleton, VA

In 2026, Bethesda's favorite theatre event **Play In A Day** returned! Five esteemed theatre companies from the area worked against the clock to write, direct, rehearse and perform original plays centered around common themes in just 24 hours. Play In A Day was held on Saturday, February 28, 2026 at Imagination Stage. Play In A Day kicked off on Friday evening 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); The Keegan Theatre (Washington, D.C.); Rorschach Theatre (Washington, D.C.) and We Happy Few (Washington, D.C.).

The 14th annual **Bethesda Film Fest** featured five short documentaries made by local filmmakers. The selected films were screened on April 10 and 11, 2026. The event returned to the Bethesda Row Landmark Cinema, which 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 E. Samantha Cheng, documentary filmmaker. The Bethesda Film Fest was supported by Bethesda Row, Bloomingdale's, The Donohoe Companies, Jane Fairweather Team, Bonnie Fogel, The Greenhill Companies, Robert Hebda, Lerch, Early and Brewer, Janet Shatz, Robin Sherman and Wendy Susswein.





The 21st annual **Bethesda Fine Arts Festival** took place on Saturday, May 9 and Sunday, May 10, 2026, 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 and craft created by over 100 of the nation's most skilled artists. Artists were selected through a juried 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.

Celebrating its 23rd year of honoring the region's best contemporary artists, **The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards** exhibition was on display at Gallery B September 4-28, 2025. The eight finalists were selected from over 325 applicants by the following artists and art educators: **Shannon Leah Collis**, Professor of Art at University of Maryland; **Andy Holtin**, Department Chair and Professor of Art, American University; and **Dr. Massa Lemu**, Associate Professor of Art, Sculpture + Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University.

In June 2026, the 22nd annual **Bethesda Painting Awards**, a Trawick Foundation Arts Initiative, was held at Gallery B from June 4-28, 2026. Eight finalists were selected from over 400 submissions by the competition's panel made up of **Mira Hecht**, contemporary artist, Washington, D.C., **Ernest Shaw**, Artist and Johns Hopkins University adjunct professor, and **Hilary Wilder**, associate professor in Painting, Virginia Commonwealth University.

The 2025 Bethesda Painting Awards finalists Malik Greene, Anna Child and Leslie Shellow were also featured at a special exhibit and installation at Bloomingdale's in Chevy Chase, MD. The October exhibit was a collaboration between Carol Trawick, Trawick Prize and Bethesda Painting Awards Founder, and Bloomingdale's.



Bethesda Fine Arts Festival

Best in Show Winner

Michael Nemnich - Printmaking

Judges' Choice Winners

Jorge Caligiuri - Mixed Media

Anke Eichstaedt-Trampler - Clothing/Fiber

Teresa Haag - Painting

Kathryn Maher - Painting

Jennifer McBrien - Clothing/Fiber

John Sterling - Furniture

2025 Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards Winners

\$10,000 Best in Show

Danni O'Brien, Baltimore, MD

\$2,000 Second Place

Tara Youngborg, Elkridge, MD

\$1,000 Third Place

Bria Sterling-Wilson, Owings Mills, MD

2026 Bethesda Painting Awards Winners

\$10,000 Best in Show

Monica Ikegwu, Baltimore, MD

\$2,000 Second Place

Julia Gould, Baltimore, MD

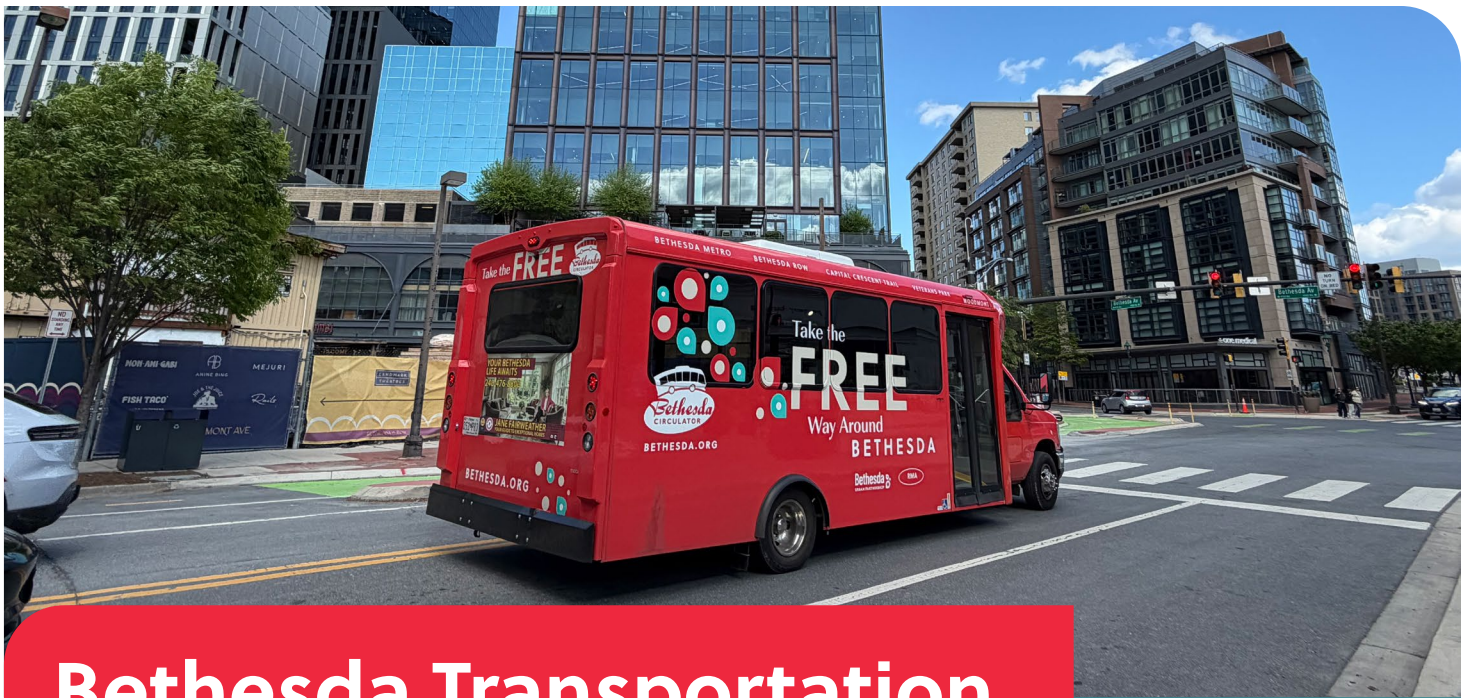
\$1,000 Third Place

Elizabeth Coffey, Richmond, VA

\$1,000 Young Artist

Kai Jones, Washington, D.C.



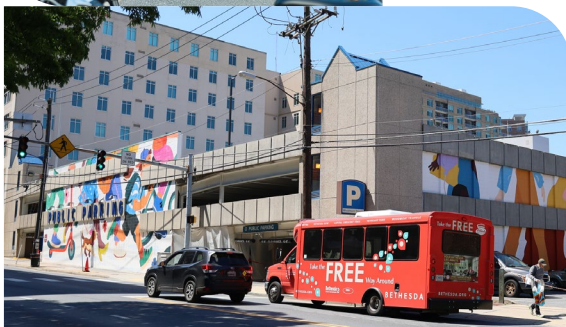


Bethesda Transportation Solutions

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 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. By hosting weekly outreach events and participating in downtown Bethesda's festivals, BTS assisted over 2,000 commuters in 2026.



BTS hosted **Bike to Work Day** on Friday, May 15th and had over 415 registrants. Several local businesses and organizations that attended: BellRinger, Bethesda Bike and Ski, Bethesda Green, Burke & Herbert Bank, Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, Griffin Cycle, Metropolitan Washington Association of Blind Athletes, Montgomery County Ride On, Pedego Electric Bikes, Potomac Pedalers, Silver, The Camille, The St. James, Village Edu and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Food and beverages were donated by: Bethesda Bagels, Silver, J. McLaughlin, Just Ice Tea and DrinkMore Water. Prizes were donated by Barre3, Bethesda Central Farm Market, Encrypted Bethesda, Griffin Cycle, Mon Ami Gabi, OneLife Fitness, Pedego Electric Bikes and Wonderland Books.

Top prizes for attendees include a bicycle and bicycle shop gift card. Additionally, a dedicated Bethesda bike commuter, Sam Tignor, and a Bethesda bike shop owner, David Bondareff, both received special awards from BTS.



The **Walk & Ride Challenge** tasked participants, including teleworkers, to incorporate walking into their day for three weeks. The top three teams for 2025 were from B.F. Saul Company. Individual participants also competed in weekly challenges to win prizes, including “Bethesda Bucks” gift cards.

The **BTS Cool Commute Photo Contest** was held in early 2026 and encouraged commuters to walk and bicycle to work during winter months and submit photos. Additionally, in 2025-2026, BTS worked with Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to host three **Bicycle Safety Classes** in downtown Bethesda. BTS also hosts a transportation event for Earth Month in April. In 2026, the **Earth Month BINGO** contest was created, with participants submitting photos of their completed BINGO card showing their use of various commute options in Bethesda.

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. BTS also conducted a cross walk striping survey in early 2026 and provided a list to MCDOT and SHA of crosswalks needing restriping.

BTS worked with MCDOT and MDOT to promote several initiatives and updates in 2025-2026, including the County Commuter Services webinars, Advisory Committee Meetings, County FareShare transit subsidy program, County-wide bicycle classes, Ride On service and fare changes, Metro Red Line station closures and MDOT Purple Line updates.

Bethesda Transportations Solutions Staff

Kristen Blackmon, *Director*

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*

David Bondareff, *Pedego E-Bikes*

Non-Voting Members

James Carlson, *Montgomery County Department of Transportation*

Sean Cullinane, *National Institutes of Health*

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

T. J. Dant, *Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center*

Dan Schlaff, *Representing Bethesda Urban Partnership*

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





Bethesda

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