

Resolution No.: 19-892
Introduced: May 27, 2021
Adopted: June 15, 2021

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Support for Continuing Open Streets

Background

1. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Montgomery Parks launched the Open Parkways program, closing portions of Sligo Creek Parkway, Little Falls Parkway, and Beach Drive to vehicle traffic on weekends to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to use these facilities in a safe and socially-distanced manner.
2. As of April 2021, Montgomery Parks reported 624,000 pedestrian and bicyclist trips during the Open Parkways periods.
3. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation began the Shared Streets program to close select County roadways to vehicle traffic to allow residents and businesses to engage in safe and socially-distanced in-street activities such as walking, biking, outdoor dining, and retail activity.
4. The Shared Streets effort includes partnerships with the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Urban Districts, Regional Services Centers, the State Highway Administration and other entities to set up outdoor dining spaces in roadways to support curbside and carryout dining at local restaurants facing indoor capacity restrictions due to the pandemic.
5. Outdoor dining and activity areas in roadways include the Bethesda Streeterly, Wheaton Streeterly, Silver Spring Streetdine, and Newell Street Temporary Neighborhood Park Expansion as well as spaces supported by other jurisdictions including Gibbs Street in the City of Rockville, the Takoma Park Streeterly in the City of Takoma Park, and the Germantown Streeterly at BlackRock.
6. Shared Streets included at least eight Temporary Neighborhood Greenways that welcomed pedestrians and bicyclists while limiting vehicles to local traffic only so residents have more space for outdoor activity and physical distancing.

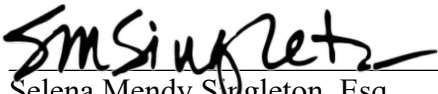
7. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Park Service closed the portion of Beach Drive in Washington, D.C., near the Montgomery County border to vehicle traffic to allow residents from the Montgomery County and the District to use the road for socially-distanced recreation.
8. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided jurisdictions around the world a chance to rethink how public spaces are best used and how they may be repurposed to better promote community health and vibrancy.
9. The County Council has strongly supported the various aforementioned Open Streets efforts by advocating for them, communicating them to the public, and through direct financial aid such as Resolution 19-690 – a \$1.25 million special appropriation to assist with the purchase of equipment to winterize the Streeteries and other outdoor dining areas.
10. The return of vehicles to Open Streets would eliminate the ability for residents to use the spaces for walking, biking, and supporting local businesses.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

The Council supports the continuation of Open Streets – including but not limited to Open Parkways, Shared Streets, Streeteries, Temporary Neighborhood Greenways, and the Beach Drive closure in Washington, D.C. – and will support efforts by County and non-County agencies or organizations to enhance these programs as appropriate.

This is a correct copy of Council action.


Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council