



City of Bowie

Memorandum

Thursday, October 10, 2024
Alfred D. Lott, ICMA-CM, CPM,
City Manager

STATUS REPORT

1. Paper Shredding & Styrofoam Recycling Event
The Public Works Department (PWD) has scheduled a paper shredding and Styrofoam recycling event at the Public Works Solid Waste/Recycling parking lot located at 16300 Annapolis Road on Saturday, November 2, 2024, from 8am-2pm. Residents can bring up to five tall kitchen bags or five archive boxes for shredding. This event is first come first served. The PWD has allocated three trucks to this event, and if all three (3) trucks are filled, we may need to shut down before 2pm. Documents may be observed while they are being shredded and Styrofoam must be free of any debris (glue or tape). Our last event in June collected 9.83 tons of paper and 38 pounds of Styrofoam!
2. Mill Branch Crossing Tax Increment Financing - County Council Committee Hearing
Staff attended the County Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee (GOFPC) meeting on October 7 to affirm the City's July 1, 2024 letter to the County supporting the Mill Branch Crossing Tax Increment Financing request. The GOFPC members Watson, Harrison, and Hawkins voted in favor of the TIF legislation, CR-062-2024 and CB-064-2024; members Dernoga and Oriadha abstained and requested additional information. Both items passed and will proceed in due course to a hearing by the full county Council.
3. Economic Development Committee (EDC) Meeting on Restaurant Attraction
The City's EDC met Wednesday and received a working group report on attracting high quality restaurants to Bowie. Key report points are that Bowie competes with other areas with comparable income demographics; the right mix of retail neighbors is important to high-end restaurants, and so is the performance of existing restaurants in the community and nearby areas; population density that supports both lunch and dinner with customers must be present; and, Bowie residents currently travel outside the City and County for perceived to be better restaurants. The most important point, and the one discussed at length, is that the County's lengthy and cumbersome permitting process is a barrier to entry. The EDC will continue discussion on this topic at their November 13 meeting. A copy of the working group report is attached.

**Bowie Economic Development Committee
Restaurant Working Group Report
October 2024**

Members: Erica Kennedy, Kevin Kennedy, Billy Louis, Michael Oleru, Chris Rizzi

A common theme in a 2023 survey conducted by the Economic Development Committee (EDC) was a desire to attract high quality restaurants to the city of Bowie. Subsequently, at its July 2024 meeting, the EDC formed a working group to propose recommendations to address this issue.

To kick start the process, the working group referred to an October 2023 panel discussion featuring retail property owners, economic development professionals and elected officials to discuss the state of retail in the city of Bowie. Among the panelists were Larry Hentz, Executive Director of Business Development at the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation and Zina Redfearn of Washington Prime Group (Bowie Town Center). The working group reached back out to these two professionals who are in the business of attracting new business for advice on how to attract quality restaurant groups.

In addition to engaging Mr. Hentz and Ms. Redfearn, the working group attended an International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) webinar titled Real Estate Trends Fueling Restaurant Franchises and interviewed a broker representing Darden, owner of brands such as Seasons 52 and Ruth's Chris Steak House as well as Olive Garden and Longhorn. Below is a summary of the key takeaways from these activities:

- Demographics- Since Bowie is competing with surrounding areas, demographics must be compatible with other locations that currently have the high-end restaurants being sought. The industry's preference is for high income and densely populated markets.
- Retail Mix/Co-tenancy- Restaurants are more likely to be successful at retail locations with the right mix of retail.
- Existing Restaurants- The performance of existing restaurants is indicative of the probability of success of new restaurants. Existing restaurants must be thriving to attract new restaurants. Because of the significant investment required to open a new restaurant, operators tend not to be trailblazers and are more likely to explore a market in which their cohorts are thriving.
- Homegrown Restaurants- There is opportunity to support local entrepreneurs by creating space for food halls and food trucks, which also creates a variety of dining options.
- Density- Daytime and residential population must be sufficient to support 1 table-turn at lunch and 2 table-turns at dinner. Restaurants need approximately 500 diners per week to be profitable assuming they are open 6 days a week.

- Economic Environment- Inflation has driven up the cost of dining, and consumers are being more discerning about where they eat. Higher priced fine dining options are likely to be impacted by a pullback in spending and less likely to open new locations.
- Permitting- The county's lengthy and cumbersome permitting process continues to be a barrier to entry.
- Quality Improvement- Bowie residents travel outside the city and county to visit restaurants perceived to deliver better service and quality food.

Based on these takeaways, the Working Group recommends the following action:

1. Connect existing restaurants with resources and organizations such as Employ Prince George's to improve workforce and quality of service.
2. Foster an environment that encourages residents to support existing restaurants and publicize thriving restaurants (i.e. Restaurant Week).
3. Create and maintain a list of second-generation restaurant space.
4. Advocate for zoning changes and support residential development that increase density at appropriate locations.
5. Create a role or add to an existing role the responsibility to assist retailers in navigating the county permitting process.