

Flats at Bethesda Avenue

Bethesda, Maryland

THE FLATS AT BETHESDA AVENUE is a mixed-use development in Bethesda, Maryland, that opened in 2015. The project's location along the 11-mile (17.7 km) Capital Crescent Trail, which runs among Washington, D.C., and Bethesda and Silver Spring, Maryland, gives residents the option to commute to work on a bike and attracts pedestrians and bicyclists to on-site retail establishments.



QUICK FACTS

- Location**
7170 Woodmont Avenue,
Bethesda, Maryland
- Status**
Opened in 2015
- Type of Project**
Mixed-use
- Site Size**
1.4 acres [0.6 ha]
- Building Size**
162 residential units; 218,000 square feet (20,300 sq m), including 28,000 square feet (2,600 sq m) of retail
- Rental Rates**
Market-rate rents from \$2,200 to over \$6,500; 38 workforce units offered below market rate
- Project Cost**
\$217 million
- Developers**
StonebridgeCarras LLC and PN Hoffman
- Architect**
SK+I Architects
- Lender**
Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company
- Equity Partners**
Northwestern Mutual Life and Buvermo Investments
- Bike Amenities**
Direct trail access, trail widening, on-site open space, bike drop-off, and bike storage
- Nearby Bicycle Infrastructure**
Adjacent to Capital Crescent Trail
- Health Features**
Fitness center, yoga room, and cardio machines

"Our residents love that they are one step from such a great D.C.-area rail trail." >> Jane G. Mahaffie, principal at StonebridgeCarras LLC

Residents of the Flats at Bethesda Avenue have direct access to the Capital Crescent Trail. (Jane G. Mahaffie)



Context for Development

The Flats at Bethesda Avenue consists of 162 market-rate and workforce residential units and 28,000 square feet (2,600 sq m) of retail space built on a former surface parking lot in downtown Bethesda. The development is adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail—one of the busiest trails in the United States, with roughly 1 million users per year.

The Flats at Bethesda Avenue was created through a public/private partnership between Montgomery County and developers StonebridgeCarras LLC and PN Hoffman. This arrangement led to a project that leverages its trail-adjacent location to support retail tenants and accommodate active transportation.

Jane G. Mahaffie, principal at StonebridgeCarras, notes, “Immediate access of our residents and retail tenants to the Capital Crescent Trail is a fabulous amenity. Retail tenants Chop’t and Paul Bakery have frontage immediately to the trail, and the outdoor seating areas of all our restaurants are quite popular as a trail stop.”

Mahaffie adds, “Our residents love that they are one step from such a great D.C.-area rail trail. The Capital Crescent Trail is one facet of the premium location for the distinctive residences at the Flats at Bethesda Avenue.”

The Flats at Bethesda Avenue’s location along the Capital Crescent Trail serves residents who commute by bike, due to the trail’s access to Washington, D.C., and connections to other regional trails, including the C&O Canal Towpath and the Rock Creek Trail. A planned light-rail line, called the Purple Line, would run between Bethesda and New Carrollton, Maryland, alongside sections of the Capital Crescent Trail and would require reconfiguring a portion of the trail in downtown Bethesda.

Active Transportation–Friendly Features

Investments in active transportation-friendly infrastructure and biking and walking amenities at the Flats at Bethesda Avenue include the following:

- » **Bicycle storage.** The Flats has a secured bike storage room for residents, which accommodates 60 bikes, with additional publicly accessible bike parking space along the trail and space for 30 bikes in the car parking garage.
- » **Direct trail access.** Residential and retail tenants can walk or ride a bike on the Capital Crescent Trail from new paths that connect directly to the property.
- » **Trail widening and improved crosswalks.** The project resulted in a widening of the Capital Crescent Trail from ten feet (3 m) to 14 feet (4.2 m) along the length of the property as well as widening of local sidewalks and narrowing of crosswalks to improve pedestrian conditions.
- » **Bicycle drop-off.** This “park and ride” system allows people using the on-site public garage to drive their cars to the Flats

The Flats at Bethesda Avenue gives retail tenants frontage directly on the Capital Crescent Trail. (*Jane G. Mahaffie*)



The Flats at Bethesda Avenue project included improvements to the Capital Crescent Trail. (*Ed McMahon*)

at Bethesda Avenue, drop off a bicycle, park their car in the underground garage, and then pick up their bicycle right outside the garage elevator so they can complete their trip on the trail. Garage elevators can also accommodate bicycles.

Development Lessons

While the Flats at Bethesda Avenue is a trail-oriented development project, it originated in Montgomery County, Maryland’s desire to increase the supply of public car parking spaces in Bethesda while also encouraging mixed-use development.

The county’s goals were achieved, since the project includes a new underground public parking facility that increased the supply of parking threefold, but the development also led to enhancements to the Capital Crescent Trail and nearby public space.

The combination of bike-friendly investments at the Flats at Bethesda Avenue and the increase in public car parking spaces shows how a public/private partnership can meet multiple development goals.

The widening of the Capital Crescent Trail and associated improvements to local park and active transportation space underscore the value that a trail can create in enlivening a local community and serving as a transportation corridor while also supporting residential and retail development projects.