



MCPB Item # 12B

MCPB Date: 11/20/08

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks *M Bradford*
Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Parks for Administration *MR*
John Hench, Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *J Hench*
Doug Alexander, Acting Chief, Park Development

FROM: Tanya Schmieler, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *TKS*
Michael Ma, Park Development Division

DATE: November 7, 2008

RE: **White Oak Recreation Center Mandatory Referral: 08904-DGS-1-
Requested Planning Board Action - Approval with conditions**

Summary of Conditions of Approval

All County development projects are submitted to the Montgomery County Planning Board (MCPB) as Mandatory Referrals for review and comments which are advisory in that statute allows the applicant to overrule the Planning Board's decision and proceed. However, as the White Oak Recreation Center project is on parkland, the applicant must comply with conditions before obtaining a park permit to construct on park property.

Staff has reviewed the mandatory referral for the White Oak Recreation Center and recommends approval with the conditions included below and resolution of issues on pages 7 and 8.

General Conditions for the White Oak Recreation Center Mandatory Referral Approval

1. The County will be responsible for construction, operation and all maintenance of the White Oak Recreation Center within and immediately adjacent to the limits of disturbance. A Memorandum of Understanding between M-NCPPC and the County must be developed for maintenance and security prior to the opening of the center. (*Attachment 4*)
2. The project shall adhere to all conditions of the Forest Conservation Plan. Additionally, all forest lost due to clearing and grading activities will be replaced at a ratio of 1:1. Planting standards must adhere to M-NCPPC Department of Park's standards as noted in the *Guidelines for Revegetation*.
3. The county will demolish the homes at 1611 and 1700 April Lane during the recreations center construction. The County will preserve access, utility service, and function of 1800 and 1850 April Lane throughout construction, unless the Department of Parks indicates that use of one or both of the houses will be discontinued. Coordinate with the Department of Parks in the event a decision is made to demolish one or both of the houses.

- The County shall apply for technical review and approval of the detailed design for this project through the Parks Department, and a park construction permit must be obtained before any clearing, demolition, grading or construction on parkland will be allowed. Outstanding design issues that must be resolved to Parks Department satisfaction prior to approval and issuance of the permit include, but are not limited to those shown on pages 7 and 8.

Figure # 1– Location of the Proposed White Oak Recreation Center



Background

The White Oak Recreation Center is an important County project that will provide much needed recreation facilities for the communities in the White Oak region. This region is a densely populated and ethnically diverse area with a variety of apartments, townhouses, and single-family neighborhoods that have no existing community recreation center facility. The center is projected to serve an area population of over 65,000 people. It is proposed for construction on parkland near the intersection of April and Stewart Lanes, adjacent to the Paint Branch Stream Valley Park (*Figure 1*).

The Recreation Center development is supported by many previous plans:

- The Department of Recreation Facility Development Plan (FY97-10) had identified the need for two community centers to serve the White Oak region.
- The July 1998 Park Recreation and Program Open Space Master Plan prepared by M-NCPPC recommended development of a facility to serve the Colesville White Oak planning area. The project is also included in the 2005 PROS Plan (Land Preservation, Park, and Recreation Plan).
- The White Oak Master Plan, updated and adopted in 1997, recommends that a new recreation center be constructed in a location central to the community, and if possible, within walking distance of the highest density housing in the White Oak Community. The site proposed in the White Oak Master Plan is M-NCPPC's April Stewart Lane Park due to the proximity of this undeveloped park site to the many nearby apartment complexes. The Planning Board, during a work session on the White Oak Master Plan, voiced a preference for the April Stewart Lane site because of its proximity to many thousands of apartment residents in the area. Although use of the April Stewart Lane Park makes for a difficult site environmentally, the County Executive and Council chose the Park over other locations.
- The Montgomery County Council approved funding for the White Oak Community Recreation Center originally in FY05 and updated the funding level as part of the FY09-14 Capital Budget. Construction for this community center is scheduled to begin in late FY09.

The Planning Board was notified in March 2006 that the County was preparing to begin work on the White Oak Recreation center on park property at April Stewart Lane, and there was a MCPB discussion item with the Recreation Department in July 2006 on this project. The Planning Board concurred with the proposal to begin planning and closely coordinate with M-NCPPC staff.

Project Description

This project provides for the design and construction of a 33,000 net square foot community recreation center. This facility includes a gymnasium, exercise room, social hall, kitchen, senior/community lounge, arts/kiln room, game room, vending space, conference room, offices, lobby, rest rooms, computer lab, multi-use athletic court, and storage space. The exterior amenities include a playing field large enough to accommodate ages 10 and above soccer matches, two multi-purpose courts, a skate spot, two playgrounds with play equipment, and on-site parking for approximately 150 vehicles (*Figure 2*).

The *2005 Park Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan* indicated that the County has a large shortage of large rectangular fields. Locating the playing field and other recreation facilities by April Lane and closest to the surrounding community will allow this field and the other outdoor amenities to be used by the community like a neighborhood park.

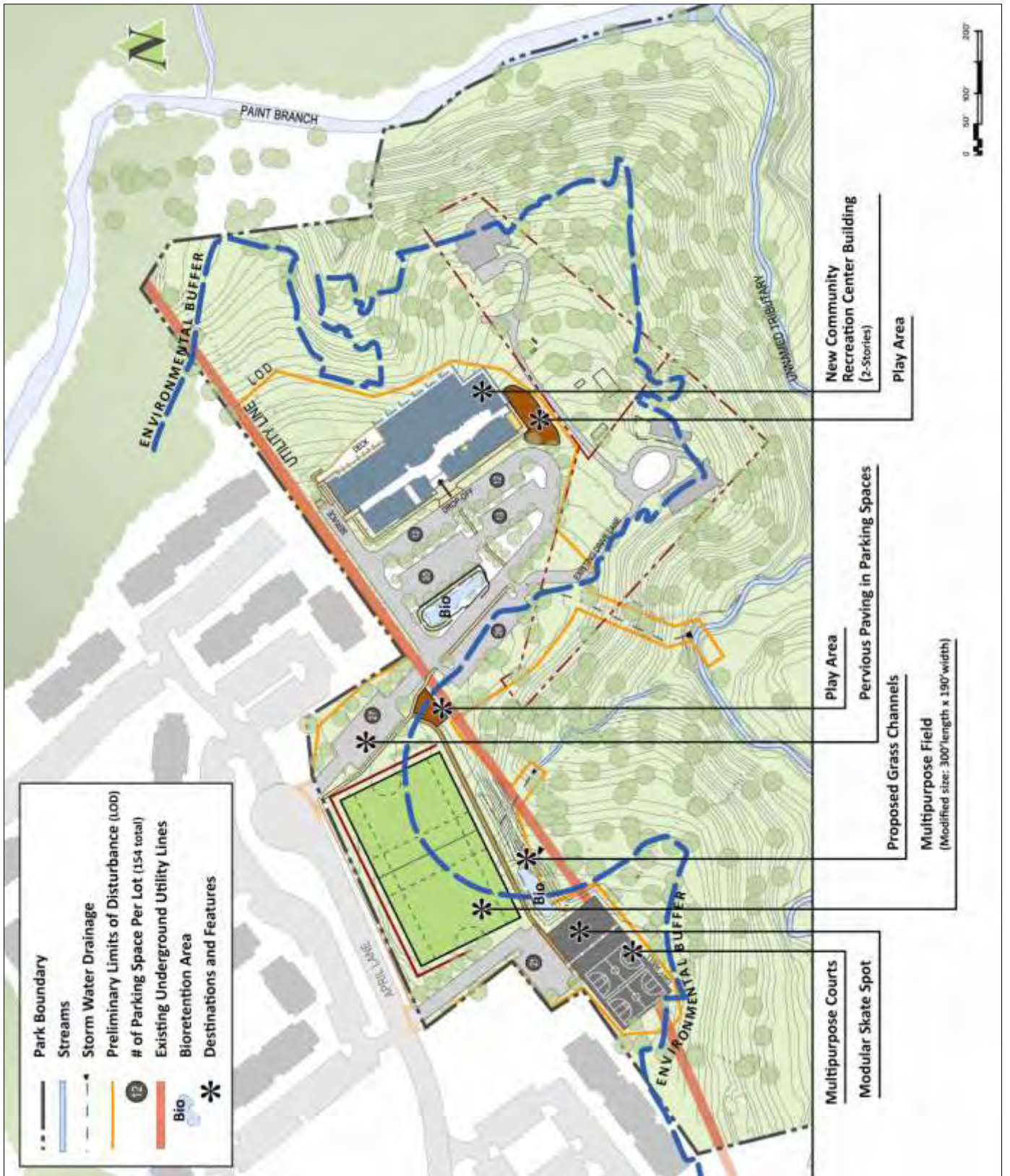


Figure # 2 – White Oak Recreation Center Mandatory Referral Design Development / Concept Plan

The April Lane site was chosen for its location in one of the densest populations of the County. There are approximately 10,000 people within a within a three quarter mile radius, in an underserved area of low income families (*Figure 3*). The center will serve residents in areas south to the Beltway and north to Randolph Road (*Figure 4*). Pedestrian access will be aided by new sidewalks connecting to the existing one on April Lane. The center will also have transit access as it is served by a bus stop with three lines and is near the proposed transit center in White Oak.

Much of the site has steep slopes and mature forest, making it impossible to develop the full Recreation Department prototype for outdoor recreation with all four athletic fields (*Figure 5*). However, the full-size building and indoor recreation program is provided, and other new outdoor recreation facilities will be available nearby at the renovated Paint Branch High School and the recently completed Stonehedge Local Park (*Figure 6*)

The County Council approved 24,330,000 for planning and construction in the FY09-14 Capital Improvements Program. Project preliminary design was completed via the Montgomery County Facility Planning project in the FY00-01 timeframe, prior to the establishment of this stand-alone project. The Project is just completing the Design Development Stage and construction is anticipated to begin in the Summer of 2009 with the center opening at the end of 2010.

Park Rental Houses

There are a total of four houses on the site of the proposed Recreation Center.

There are two park rental houses on the property at 1611 April Lane and 1700 April Lane. Both houses sit within the footprint of the proposed development and must be demolished in order to fit the Recreation Center's reduced program on the site. The house at 1611 April Lane is located in the area proposed for the multi-purpose courts and skate spot, while 1700 April Lane is within the first bay of parking that primarily serves the multi-purpose field. The retention of these houses would further restrict the developable footprint of the site. Therefore, staff supports their demolition, and the County has agreed to demolish the houses.

There are two additional houses on the site at 1800 and 1850 April Lane. These houses sit outside the County's proposed limits of disturbance, but are impacted by the project. The house at 1800 April Lane is vacant and in poor condition. The house at 1850 April Lane is occupied through a lease, which ends on December 21, 2008. The tenant has been notified that the lease will not be renewed. The County's current plans provide for continued access to these properties from the Recreation Center site.

The ultimate use and disposition of both of these houses is under review. If a determination is made to retain one or both of the houses for some beneficial purpose, then the Recreation Center project must preserve access, utility service, and functionality to the houses and associated structures both during and after construction. If a decision is made to demolish one or both of the houses, then the removal of the houses and associated structures, removal of pavement and other impervious surfaces, and restoration or reforestation of the house sites provides a significant opportunity for environmental mitigation by the County for construction of the recreation center. Park staff will continue dialogue with the County through the design process on this matter.

Discussion

April Stewart Lane Park, although it has significant environmental concerns, was selected as the site for the White Oak Community Center after six years of searching for a site that would serve this dense area of the County. There is no other feasible site that is in safe walking distance of the apartment residents.

The major challenge in this project is to achieve a balance between providing important recreation facilities for the community and preserving the important environmental features of the stream valley and forested areas. Environmental considerations are a big part of this project M-NCPPC Staff has been working with the consultants and County Staff since the submission of the mandatory referral, and many improvements have been recently made, including adding a vegetated roof. Maximum efforts are being made to minimize clearing and grading and, the building is being designed to meet or exceed LEED Silver Certification.

As this site was being studied, the County looked at a number of design options during the Conceptual Design Phase. It was decided that only a small portion of the site would be developed. Out of a total of approximately 42.94 acres only approximately 9.23 acres of this site are proposed for development. The County also decided that locating the playing field and other recreation facilities by April Lane and closest to the surrounding community will allow this field and the other outdoor amenities to be used by the community like a neighborhood park. Locating the playing field along April Lane also allowed the design team to design the building to meet the Program of Requirements and locate it outside of the stream valley buffer. The playing field will encroach into the stream valley buffer, but will be replacing the construction debris that is located there now.

To respond to the challenges on the site, and at our request, the Recreation Department initially made the following accommodations:

- Provided a two story building to reduce site coverage.
- Reduced the number of athletic fields from four to one.
- Eliminated the “spray park” facility called for in the Program.
- Reduced the total amount of parking (The project now includes approximately 150 parking spaces)
- Pulled the building and parking farther from the steep slope area with erodible soils, and slightly reduced parking and paving.
- Provided good pedestrian connections into the site by extending the April Lane sidewalk and providing convenient access walks to the recreation facilities and the Center.

Following the original mandatory referral submission in August 2008, staff met with the County and consultants and requested additional revisions to minimize environmental impacts and make the athletic field area more inviting and accessible by the community. Revised plans have made additional improvements including:

- Adding a vegetated roof and additional pervious paving.
- Reducing impacts of storm water outfalls.
- Reducing tree clearing by relocating the geothermal well field from behind the building to under the parking lot
- Revising the field area to remove the large retaining wall and fence.

Outstanding issues requiring review and compliance prior to issuance of park permit and construction on Park property

There are still several concerns that will need to be worked out during detailed design prior to issuing a park permit. They are listed in the section below. As this project is still evolving and will continue to change prior to construction, other issues may be identified in the future.

Stormwater Management Issues

Further design coordination and modifications will be required during detailed design to ensure the pervious paving approach will function to meet water quality needs and not create erosive conditions below the outfalls. Some of the items that will require further review by park staff include:

- Permeable cross sections along with surfaces slopes that appear to exceed recommended slopes for pervious pavements. Additional consideration needs to be given to design loadings for delivery access routes and other high use areas for long-term viability. Consider use of pervious pavement for sidewalk areas.
- Grading and flow path design that promotes sheet flow across vegetated areas, minimizes curb and gutter, increases use of vegetated swales, and modifies of overflow inlets.
- Review of vegetated roof design and overflow conveyance system.
- Drainage areas divisions and outfall designs will need to be designed to minimize impacts on natural resources and promote sheet flow below outfall, including the use of level spreader trenches.
- The proposed surface sand filter will need to be redesigned to have a more organic shape that is integrated into the landscape and relate to access route for existing buildings. The overflow from this facility needs to be studied to avoid potential impacts to the existing structures downstream and moved slightly to the west if needed to provide connection for the lease property.
- The grass swale below the soccer field should be constructed as a bioretention swale with an underdrain to slow runoff and enhance treatment.

Environmental Issues and Landscaping

- The Limit of Disturbance (LOD), particularly along the back wall of the building, must be field reviewed/adjusted at time of detailed design, and tree protection measures incorporated into the design.
- Sewer location must be field located with Parks Department during detailed design. The LOD for the sewer construction cut must be kept to a maximum of 12-15 feet. If crossing the stream is necessary, a stable stream crossing must be provided with stream restoration (approx. 300 ft mostly downstream of crossing) based on natural channel design concepts. Please note that the recently revised outfall layout has not been reviewed and may require significant adjustments during design.
- Specific requirements on the size, location, amount, and type of reforestation will be determined prior to park permit.
- Landscaping Plan, including parking lot and facility shading and street trees along April and must be approved prior to issuing a park permit. Impacts to existing trees should be greatly limited. Deciduous tree shading for playgrounds, picnic, basketball, and skateboard area will be needed

to protect from summer sun while retaining good visibility. Large trees adjacent to bioretention area next to field would provide an attractive view from parking area. Dumpster should be screened from adjacent apartment building.

Parking Areas and Pathways

- Consider using different types in of pavement in different areas to be test cases for future development.
- Remove old road (asphalt and base stone), till sub-grade (12" depth) and incorporate compost, and restore to pervious condition up to the point where it will connect with the adjacent property. This work will need to be closely coordinated with an M-NCPPC arborist due to trees adjacent to roadway.

Recreation Facilities

- Provide maximum visibility of basketball court areas. Consider solar powered security light and surveillance cameras.
- Construct facilities to Park specifications.
- Field area re-design to eliminate fence and provide two small sitting retaining wall areas or a grassy bowl. Provide wide steps to field, in center if possible, to create an attractive entrance and neighborhood access. Flare out retaining wall on east side of field to provide additional usable area.

Other Mandatory Referral Issues

Staff has reviewed the mandatory referral submission and finds it consistent with area master plans and in compliance with parking, setback and other zoning standards. The Center will not violate the County noise ordinance. An acceptable traffic analysis was also submitted. It estimated that the Center would generate 30 or more total peak-hour trips during a typical weekday morning and evening peak periods and adequately addressed Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) and Policy Area Mobility Review (PAMR) impact of the project. (*Attachments 1-3*).

Conclusion

Staff recommends approval of the mandatory referral subject to the conditions included in this memorandum.

Figure # 3 – Population Density within 1/2 and 3/4 miles of the proposed White Oak Recreation Center

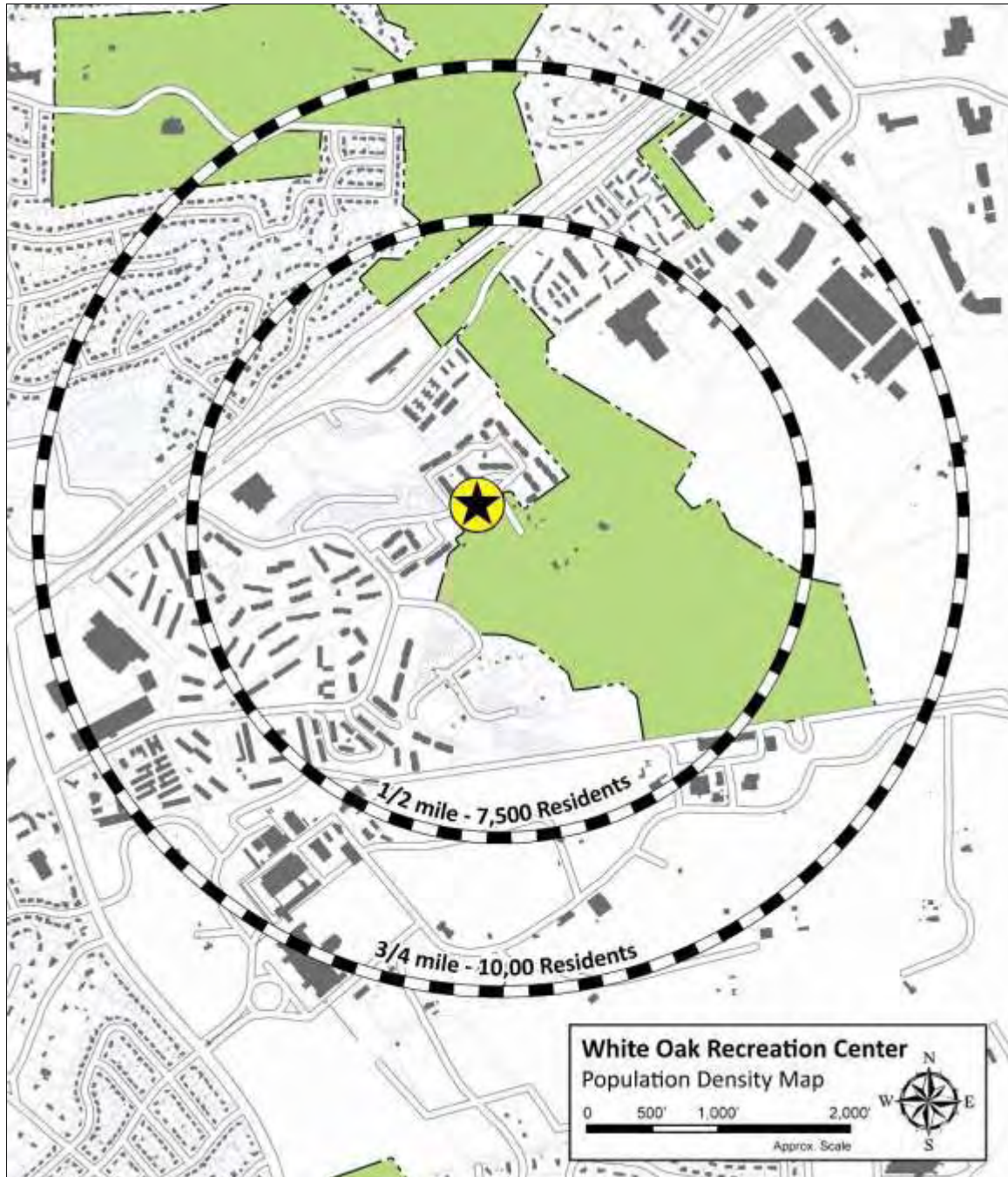


Figure # 5 - Useable Site (North of Stream)

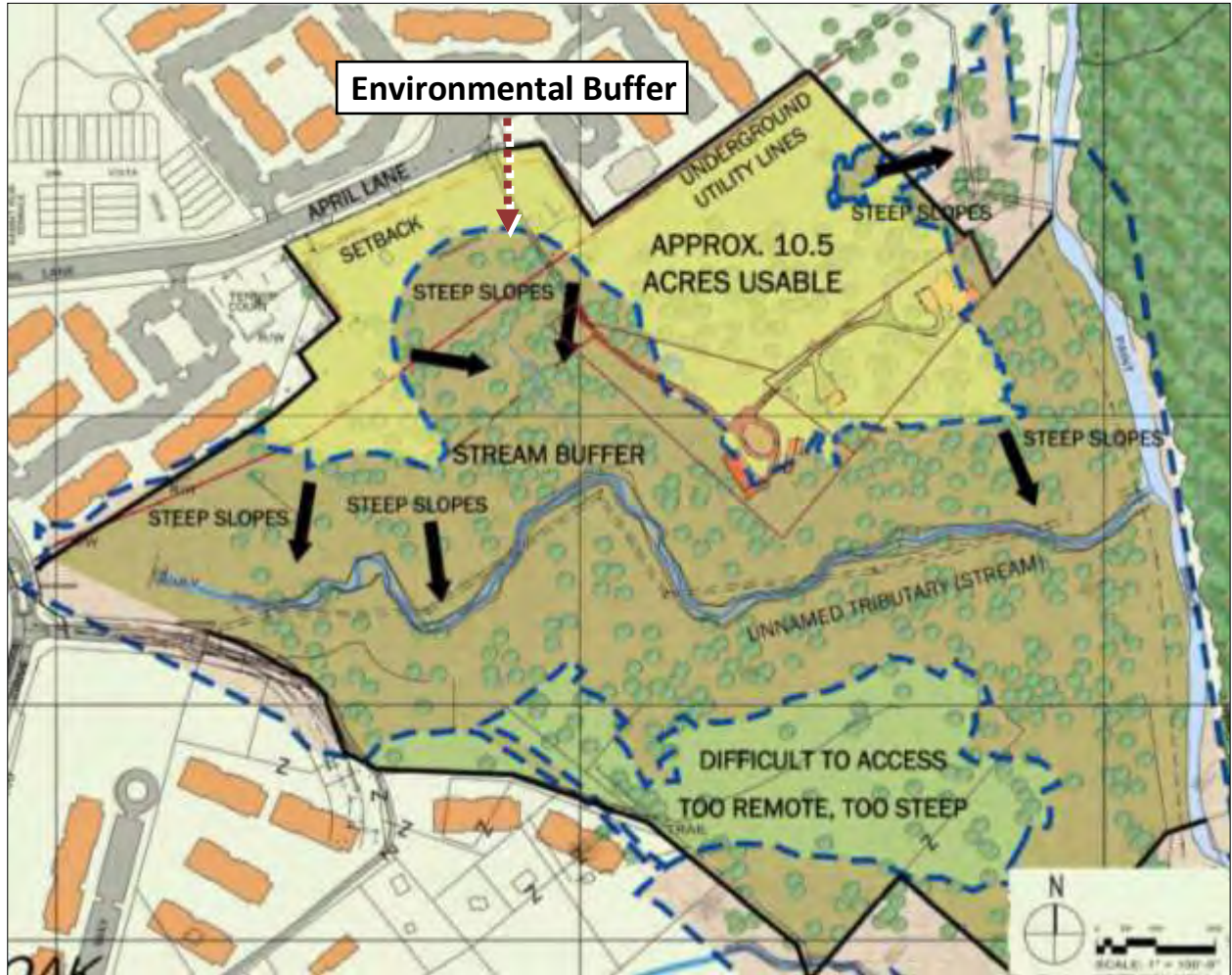


Figure # 6 – Facilities nearby the proposed White Oak Recreation Center

