



October 11, 2012

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 3, 2012

TO: **Montgomery County Planning Board**

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks *M Bradford*
 Michael F. Riley, Deputy Director of Parks
 Dr. John E. Hench, Ph.D., Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PPSD) *J Hench*

FROM: Brooke Farquhar, Supervisor, Park & Trail Planning Section, PPSD *Brooke Farquhar*
 Rachel Davis Newhouse, Planner Coordinator, (PPSD) *Rachel Davis Newhouse*

SUBJECT: Public Ownership versus Private Ownership for new Urban Parks

Recommended Action

This item is for discussion purposes only. No action is necessary.

Background

As part of every mixed-use, high-density sector plan over the past few years, the Department of Parks has recommended, and the Board and Council have approved, open space systems that include both publicly owned urban parks and privately owned public use spaces. This practice became policy in the *2012 Park Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan*, approved by the Board in July of 2012. *PROS* includes Urban Park Guidelines for the pattern, hierarchy, roles, and types of urban parks. The guidelines provide direction to park and recreation recommendations in area master plans/sector plans, park master plans, park facility plans and CIP projects. Specifically, *PROS* recommends that a system of parks and open spaces be provided for every urban master plan or sector plan area through a combination of public and private efforts. Urban open space systems should:

...support a vibrant and sustainable urban center by creating open spaces that will be comfortable, attractive, easily accessible, and provide a range of experiences, up to and including festival and outdoor event spaces. Those open spaces that rise to the level of serving as a focal point of community life for the planning area are typically recommended to be publicly owned and managed parks, while those open spaces serving a smaller district, neighborhood, or block are often recommended as public use spaces owned or managed by the private sector. (page 21, *Final Draft – 2012 PROS Plan*, July 19, 2012)

The question of when an urban open space should be owned by the public sector rather than the private sector has not yet been discussed with the Board except on a case-by-case basis during each sector plan. In order to move forward with park recommendations in future plans, Park staff will share observations from case studies around the region and country.

Over the past several months, Park Staff have studied numerous urban parks districts and has information on the ownership patterns, development patterns, programming patterns and management patterns to share with the Board.

Staff will be presenting the rationale for public ownership of urban parks/public spaces based on recently approved sector plans and *PROS*. Staff will also present examples and case studies of urban parks and town squares from local jurisdictions and around the country that have developed various strategies for developing and operating urban parks which guarantee full public access and have created funding sources that are used to maintain, program and police these active vibrant spaces to the high degree that is needed.

PC:

Rose Krasnow, Interim Director, Planning Department

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