

Semi-Annual Report

Fall 2015



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M-NCPPC Montgomery County

Fall 2015 Semi-Annual Report

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Letter from the Chair

President Leventhal and Members of the Council:

I am pleased to present our Fall 2015 Semi-Annual Report on the latest achievements of the Montgomery County Planning Board, Planning Department and Department of Parks. This report highlights our efforts to strengthen the county's economic competitiveness and improve the quality of life enjoyed by our residents by moving beyond the basic elements of smart growth and transit-oriented development.

We will not maximize the benefits of transit by simply concentrating development around Metrorail stations (or future transit routes, such as the Purple Line). Planning for neighborhoods served by high quality transit must include high quality design to take full advantage of the public investment in rail or rapid bus connections. By the same token, many of the same factors that make transit-oriented development successful and appealing, such as walkability and a variety of uses, are increasingly important in neighborhoods outside the areas served by frequent and convenient transit services.

Our efforts to raise the bar for design in transit-oriented locations are reflected in proposed plans for Greater Lyttonsville, where two Purple Line light rail stations are proposed, and Downtown Bethesda, with its future Purple Line stop and existing Metrorail station. The planning work underway in these areas has the potential to bring new amenities, diversify the mix of incomes and produce more economic opportunity.

Recent work in areas not served by high levels of transit service includes the Westbard Sector Plan and Montgomery Village Master Plan. These plans propose to encourage infill and redevelopment in strategic locations, while maintaining the characteristics that have made these neighborhoods appealing for many years. These plans are intended to facilitate some of the same benefits as new development in transit-served locations, such as improved walkability, better and wider choices of retail, housing and services, and a reduced need for driving to meet the needs of daily life.

As we continue to look beyond – and build upon – the concepts underlying smart growth and transit-oriented development, attention to quality of place is becoming more important than ever. This trend is evident in places like Rock Spring, an office park that was once in high demand by businesses but now struggles to retain and attract tenants. The recently launched Rock Spring Master Plan will consider new ways to revitalize the area through residential and commercial development, new street grids and potential transit connections.

Strategies for the Rock Spring Master Plan and similar areas will be informed by the Planning Department study completed in June on changes in the regional office market. This research shows that office centers are best positioned to compete regionally when they are located in mixed-use developments with a strong sense of place, a quality environment and improved transit access.

In a similar vein, we are taking steps to make bicycling safer and more attractive throughout Montgomery County with a comprehensive revision to the Bicycle Master Plan. The new Countywide plan will focus on how to incorporate next-generation bicycle facilities into the transportation network as efficiently and effectively as possible. Public meetings to solicit input into the new bike plan are ongoing and already have met with a strong positive response from members of the community.

Our other recent projects include:

- Our Master Plan for MARC rail stations in Boyds and Germantown is examining methods of improving access and getting more out of existing investments in heavy rail transit.
- Our work with the Maryland Transit Administration and County agencies on the Purple Line light rail stations continues, with a renewed focus on saving costs.
- We are revising the provisions of the Montgomery County Code governing the subdivision of land. Like the new zoning code, these changes will modernize and streamline the development review process and help to address economic challenges by making strategically located development easier to build.
- We are studying ways to increase the supply of moderately-priced housing units through a study of rental housing patterns. We expect this study, along with the Bethesda Downtown Plan's density transfer system and related concepts, will generate fresh recommendations for consideration by the Council.
- We are working hard to give citizens the information they need to make their participation in planning decisions as meaningful as possible. New digital tools, including online surveys, videos and interactive maps, have recently been developed by planners to engage as many County residents as possible.
- Our initiatives on urban parks, athletic fields and trails are producing innovative approaches to deliver new amenities that serve the needs of the present as well as the future for great parks.

Finally, I can't close this letter without reporting some great news. M-NCPPC recently earned a record-setting sixth National Gold Medal from the National Recreation and Park Association. This unprecedented award recognizes our service to the 1.8 million residents in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, and the hard work and dedication of our staff.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a horizontal line and a small loop.

Casey Anderson
Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board and
Vice-Chair, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Planning Director's Overview

Over the past six months, the Planning Department has vigorously worked on creating the best urban, best suburban and best rural communities in the region. This effort has focused on addressing growth and infrastructure solutions in the County that promote transit-oriented development as well as finer-grain planning through infill, mixed uses and design excellence. The goal for all our communities is to create vibrant, walkable, connected and accessible places, no matter if the setting is urban, suburban or rural.

As we work to manage growth, it is clear that we need new and creative approaches to addressing infrastructure challenges and maintaining compatibility with our existing communities. Criteria for growth and infrastructure are being updated through the newest Subdivision Staging Policy (formerly called the Growth Policy). This quadrennial policy is being crafted to include guidance for the administration of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO), which matches the timing of private development with the availability of public services. This effort is a prime opportunity to look for new ways to grow in a seamless, smart manner.

In addition, the Planning Department's recent efforts have focused on the following:

- Expeditious review and approval of significant new development projects in all parts of the County, including the Clarksburg Town Center, Ripley East and Elizabeth Square in Silver Spring, the first new project in Chevy Chase Lake, 8008 Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda and the new Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission headquarters and adjacent residential building in Wheaton.
- Implementation and refinement of the new County Zoning Ordinance, which has been in effect for nearly a year.
- Continuous improvement of the efficiency of the development review process through updating subdivision regulations, improving Record Plat review and implementing a 120-day deadline for site plan approvals.
- Special studies on important issues and trends that will inform and impact the County's future, such as those analyzing the office market and rental housing.

The Department typically has six or seven active Master or Sector Plans under development at any one time. We focus on plans that present real and immediate opportunities to improve and revitalize established communities, or transform areas of the County that are underutilized. All plans include significant and creative community outreach.

Recent planning efforts in Downtown Bethesda, Westbard, Greater Lyttonsville, Montgomery Village and Aspen Hill build on the positive attributes of our communities, while strengthening pedestrian connections, encouraging mixed-use development, creating new public open spaces and ensuring environmental sustainability.

New plans for Rock Spring and White Flint 2 are just getting underway and will tackle the challenge of transforming older suburban office parks into vibrant, new mixed-use communities. The Master Plan for the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) Rail Stations in Boyds and Germantown is

also beginning and will provide the opportunity to explore how the MARC system can be better used both as transportation infrastructure and a way of promoting community-building.

In addition, we are meeting the growing need for safe cycling routes in our region with a new Bicycle Master Plan that will consider the newest types of bikeways, such as separated and buffered bike lanes, and bicycle boulevards, as well as secure bicycle storage facilities at transit stations. The network will be developed using an evaluation of the varying levels of stress imposed on cyclists by traffic on County roadways.

To determine the effectiveness of our Master Plans, we are starting to evaluate past plans to gauge how well they have been implemented and lived up to expectations. This Master Plan Reality Check will help determine if anticipated changes, such as transportation infrastructure or mixed-use development, materialized as expected and how effectively priority planning initiatives worked within a specific community. We will test traditional assumptions and determine if they should be modified based on past performance.

Our planning work is also being influenced by big-picture studies of offices and housing. The recently completed analysis of the regional office market, which reinforces the importance of mixed-use environments in attracting and retaining great office tenants, is helping our current master planning efforts in Rock Spring and White Flint 2. A recently launched study of County rental housing will supply valuable data and new tools that will influence other Master and Sector Plans.

Improving the quality of the County's architecture and urban design is another of our goals that is moving forward. We are building on recommendations made by Boulder, Colorado-based consultant, Nore Winter, in January 2015 and are working on improving design guidelines developed with Master Plans that help direct staff as they review regulatory cases.

As part of this initiative, we held the first annual Design Excellence Award competition this summer for completed projects in the County. The winning entry was selected from more than 30 entries by a panel of experts in September and will be announced on October 22, 2015 at a celebration cohosted by the Potomac Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects. This project will be publicized as an example of the top-notch design that is now evident in Montgomery County as the result of careful planning and development incentives.

We look forward to developing more ways of enhancing the County's communities over the next six months. A significant part of this effort will be the crafting of the new Subdivision Staging Policy, which will help to reinforce and implement our County's new era of infill development and redevelopment.

At the same time, we are focused on making sure that our employees are prepared for the professional challenges ahead and have been providing a wide array of training opportunities and professional development opportunities. Planning Department staff has participated in Leadership Montgomery, the Urban Land Institute Regional Leadership Institute and a variety of regional and national conferences. The Pike and Rose development, along with the White Flint Sector Plan, won a national award in April 2015 at the annual American Planning Association conference held in

Seattle. Clare Lise Kelly, a long-time member of our Historic Preservation Office, is being honored with the Kea Medal from the Potomac Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects – a well-deserved recognition of Planning Department staff expertise and excellence.

Montgomery County is again at the forefront of planning ideas and the next six months will be an exciting chance to invent, implement and move forward.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gwen Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gwen" and last name "Wright" clearly distinguishable.

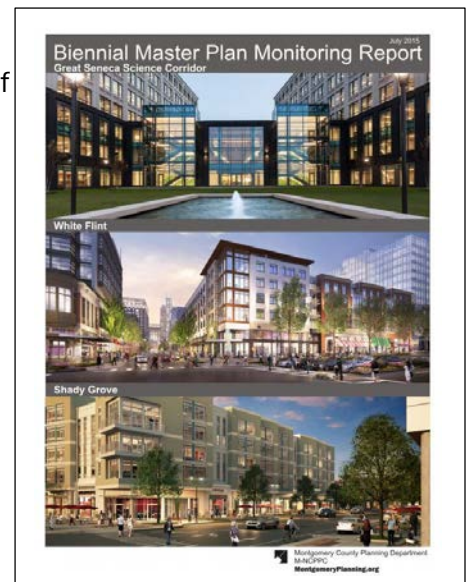
Gwen Wright
Planning Department Director

Master and Sector Plans – Progress over the Past Six Months

Biennial Master Plan Monitoring Report

This report was completed in July 2015 and presents the progress of implementation of the White Flint Sector Plan, Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan and Shady Grove Sector Plan. These three plans are intended to transform typical, auto-oriented suburban areas into more dynamic, sustainable neighborhoods focused on multi-modal transit and mixed-use development.

The staging restrictions stipulated in the three plans allow for monitoring and management of development to ensure that current infrastructure and facilities are not overloaded. The Implementation Advisory Committees for the three areas have been important conduits for information and discussion about advancing the plan goals.



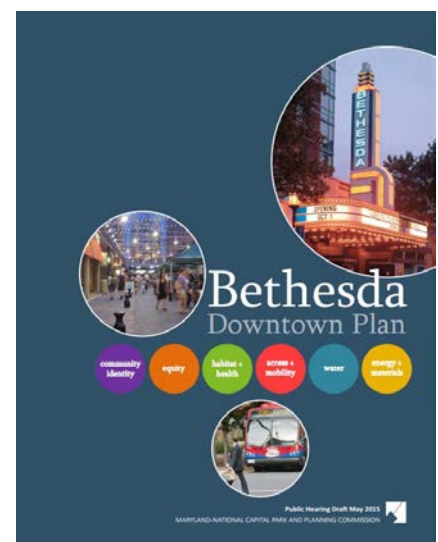
While progress is being made, the report demonstrates that there are obstacles to fully implementing these plans. In order to proceed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 in each plan, all of the requirements of Stage 1 must be completed, and none of the plans have advanced to the second stage, since the needed first-stage improvements have yet to be completed. Projects that will increase multi-modal transportation options and development of public facilities are critical to moving forward.

To move to the next stage of the White Flint Sector Plan, the Plan's recommended mode share goals must be rigorously pursued and the public street grid constructed. Funding the Corridor Cities Transitway and attaining mode share goals are essential next steps for the implementation of the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan. Priorities for the Shady Grove Sector Plan include relocating the school bus depot and funding major intersection/interchange improvements.

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan

Over the past six months, Planning Department staff worked with residents, property owners and other stakeholders to refine the vision for the Bethesda Downtown Plan – one that is based on economic, social and environmental sustainability. This Sector Plan builds on the success of Downtown Bethesda as a popular commercial destination and walkable district surrounded by residential neighborhoods. A key goal for the plan is to sustain Downtown Bethesda as a competitive economic force in the region.

The Working Draft of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan was presented to the Planning Board in May and a public hearing held in June 2015 at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Center. Planning



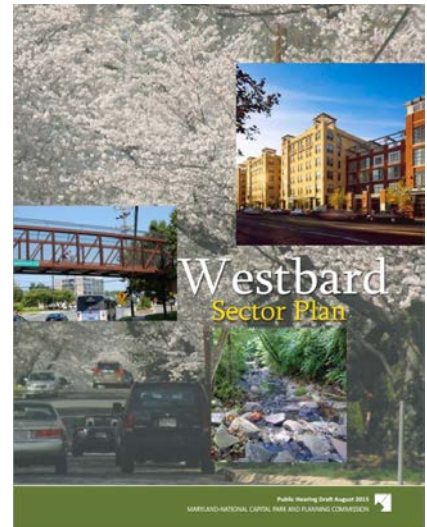
Board work sessions to review each aspect of the Sector Plan commenced in July and will continue through November. Learn more about the Bethesda Downtown Plan at http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/bethesda_downtown/index.shtm

Westbard Sector Plan

The new Westbard Sector Plan, the first such effort in the area since 1982, aims to revitalize an older commercial center by introducing a mix of uses, improving environmental sustainability, creating pedestrian and bike connections, and supporting neighbor-serving retail. Retaining affordable housing, restoring the Willett Branch stream and creating parks and gathering spaces are also part of the Sector Plan. Community workshops and meetings held in fall 2014 and early 2015 informed the proposed building heights with a goal of preserving the neighborhood scale of the area.

The Working Draft of the Plan was presented to the Planning Board in July 2015 and a public hearing was held in September. Work sessions refine the Plan are continuing through December 2015.

Learn more about the Westbard Sector Plan: www.montgomeryplanning.org/planwestbard.



Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan

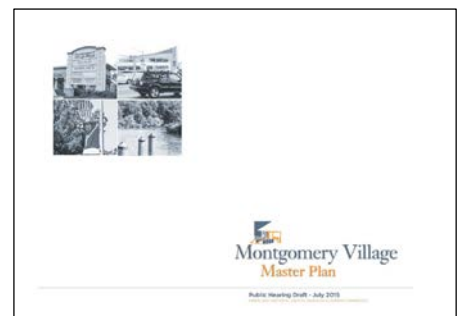
Spurred by the future construction of two Purple Line light rail stations in Greater Lyttonsville, this Sector Plan examines ways to leverage those transit hubs, while preserving the integrity of area neighborhoods that have a rich history and a strong sense of community. It recommends ways of connecting residential, industrial and institutional districts, attracting mixed-use development and expanding parks, trails and open spaces. The Plan builds on the 2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan and its goal to preserve this diverse community as a desirable place to live, work and play.



After community meetings were held in January and April, the Planning team revised proposals for bike and pedestrian connections in and around the Rosemary Hills Lyttonsville Local Park. The Working Draft of the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan was completed in September 2015 and presented to the Planning Board on October 8. Learn more about the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan: www.montgomeryplanning.org/greaterLP.

Montgomery Village Master Plan

Montgomery Village was purposefully planned with a variety of housing types and retail centers to appeal to different lifestyles. The Public Hearing Draft Master Plan recommends preserving this variety and expanding housing choices in the future, as well as protecting the Village's recreation and open spaces.



Limited redevelopment opportunities exist in the Village and the Public Hearing Draft Master Plan strongly recommends focusing on a sustainable and competitive Village Center. Short blocks with

identifiable edges to reinforce the mixed uses and the introduction of new housing units can potentially transform the suburban blocks into a walkable community. Connected and inviting public spaces will reinvigorate a sense of community and create attractive centers for community life.

The Working Draft of the Master Plan recommends a transition from the Town Sector zone, which was eliminated in the new County Zoning Ordinance. In addition to the implementation of new underlying zones, the plan recommends an overlay zone that is intended to preserve the unique Village character; protect existing open space and conservation areas; and ensure a compatible relationship between new and existing development.

Planning staff conducted an aggressive outreach effort from January to March 2015, including the MV Matters series of community meetings focusing on how best to rezone the Village.

The Working Draft of the Montgomery Village Master Plan was approved by the Planning Board in July 2015 and a public hearing held in September. Work sessions with the Planning Board will be held in October. Learn more about the Montgomery Village Master Plan: www.montgomeryplanning.org/mvp.

New Master and Sector Plans

Rock Spring Master Plan

The Rock Spring Master Plan, launched in July 2015, examines opportunities for reimagining an older suburban office park as a vibrant community. Ideas being explored include a new street network, public use spaces and amenities, residential and non-residential uses, sustainable environmental measures and infrastructure needs within this area of North Bethesda.



The challenges of developing a strategy for Rock Spring stem from its single-use status as an office park with high vacancy rates and little in the way of amenities and uses that might attract a new generation of companies. The current office vacancy rate in Rock Spring is 21.6 percent, higher than the County's vacancy rate of 15 percent.

The 1992 North Bethesda/Garrett Park Sector Plan recommended some mixed-use zoning in the Rock Spring area, but only one residential development of 390 multi-family units has been constructed. Most of the property in Rock Spring was converted to the Employment Office (EOF) zone during the recent zoning rewrite effort.

In addition, the 1992 Sector Plan recommended the North Bethesda Transitway to connect the White Flint area with Montgomery Mall via Old Georgetown Road and Rock Spring Drive. The Transitway is included in the approved 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan (CTCFMP) and provides a framework for re-evaluating Rock Spring.

These issues were discussed at a public open house event held in September 2015, when business owners, residents and others had the opportunity to offer their ideas for the Rock Spring Master

Plan. A Draft Project Work Scope for the Plan will be considered by the Planning Board in October. Future community meetings and outreach efforts are planned for this fall.

White Flint 2 Sector Plan

The White Flint 2 Sector Plan was re-launched in April 2015 to address improvements to the area between the City of Rockville and the White Flint and Twinbrook Sector Plans. In addition to identifying redevelopment and infill opportunities, the Sector Plan will address key infrastructure relationships to ensure a connected community.

Challenges of the Sector Plan include reinvigorating older office parks and improving transportation networks, including the redesign of Rockville Pike into a tree-lined boulevard. The Plan will also consider integrating land uses on both sides of the CSX tracks and proposed MARC station, and encouraging mixed-use, walkable developments. Coordination with the White Flint Implementation Advisory Committee, Friends of White Flint and City of Rockville are essential elements of the community outreach efforts.



The Planning Board approved the revised Scope of Work for the White Flint 2 Sector Plan in September 2015. Learn more about the White Flint 2 Sector Plan: www.montgomeryplanning.org/wf2

Bicycle Master Plan

A comprehensive update to the Bicycle Master Plan was launched in June 2015 to create a low-stress network of bikeways and facilities, and reflect the latest thinking in bicycle planning. Since that Master Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2005, the cycling world has changed substantially. Separated and buffered bicycle lanes, bicycle boulevards and bicycle storage facilities have increased safety and convenience. Planning methods have advanced to better determine the different types of bicyclists and their needs.



The new Bicycle Master Plan is intended to reflect that progress and the concerns of County residents who would bicycle more if they felt comfortable doing so. A network tailored to meet the needs of the various types of bicyclists will meet latent demand, as well as support economic activity centers and help to meet the County's non-auto driver mode share goals. Planning staff is coordinating the schedule for the bikeways plan update with the technical update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways.

The first phase of the Bicycle Master Plan began with a community meeting held in April 2015 at the Johns Hopkins Montgomery County Campus. County planners initiated the Plan by focusing on the areas surrounding the future Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) to ensure the latest thinking in bicycle planning is reflected in ongoing projects in that area, including the CCT, the Life Sciences Center Loop and development approvals. The goal is to develop a regional bikeway network plan for the

Greater Seneca Science Corridor area to maximize the coordination, connectivity and effectiveness of all transportation systems.

Planners are studying the stresses imposed on cyclists by motorized traffic on road segments, intersection approaches and intersections to better understand cyclists' needs. This analytic tool is based on a 2012 report from San Jose State University's Mineta Transportation Institute that analyzes the causes of these stresses, including higher volume and higher speed traffic, frequent parking turnover and bicyclists' experiences in crossing major roads at intersections. Learn more about the Bicycle Master Plan:

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/bikeplan>

MARC Rail Station Plan for Germantown and Boyds

This Master Plan will evaluate land use, zoning, design and access conditions at the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) stations in Germantown and Boyds. Recommendations will focus on ways of creating transit station areas that are sensitive to the character and scale of these historic communities, while providing additional opportunities for physical and operational improvements to the stations and enhancements to commuter rail service in Montgomery County. This effort is based on ongoing studies of parking and access issues at MARC stations in the County undertaken by the Maryland Transit Administration and Montgomery County Department of Transportation.



Recommended land uses and existing zones will be evaluated for consistency with the desired scale and character for the area. Access and connections in the vicinity of the station will be evaluated and enhancements recommended where needed. In coordination with MARC Rail and County and State agencies, the Plan will consider land uses and alternative arrangements for existing surface parking and access.

Community meetings and outreach efforts will target current and potential users of the MARC system. Handouts to commuters, signage on trains, interactive web pages and electronic questionnaires will be produced to engage riders and stakeholders in the planning process. Community work sessions will be held over the next six months to develop Plan recommendations that will be presented to the Planning Board in summer 2016. Find out more about this plan:

www.montgomerplanning.org/marcrailplan

Shady Grove Sector Plan Amendment

Work on an amendment to the Shady Grove Sector Plan is proposed to begin in spring 2016. This update will consider potential adjustments to the staging in the approved and adopted 2006 Shady Grove Sector Plan.

Currently, insufficient residential capacity (only 174 dwelling units) remains in Stage 1 of the Sector Plan to realize the vision for the area west of the Metrorail station. Stage 2 cannot be opened until major infrastructure is programmed. Piecemeal rezoning is taking the place of the comprehensive development envisioned by the Sector Plan. Achieving mixed-use development in the Metro West

District (with or without the proposed “special events center”) calls for re-evaluation of the implementation strategy in the Sector Plan.

Research and Special Projects:

Subdivision Staging Policy Update

Revisions to the Subdivision Staging Policy are currently underway. This quadrennial policy includes criteria and guidance for the administration of the County’s Adequate Public Facility Ordinance (APFO), which matches the timing of private development with the availability of public services.



In the past, the APFO was designed to ensure that road and school capacity – as well as water and sewer and other infrastructure – kept pace with growth. Where new areas of the County were developed, infrastructure to support new homes and businesses was needed.

Today, much of the County has been developed. Growth is occurring through infill development and redevelopment, including the resale of homes in many of the County’s established neighborhoods. This type of growth creates pressure on transportation systems and school facilities; however, the current tools used to evaluate the impact of development may not adequately address these changing growth patterns.

Planning staff is researching new ideas in transportation and school capacity planning in preparation for the revised Subdivision Staging Policy, which will be presented to the Planning Board in May 2016. Learn more about the update to the Subdivision Staging Policy:

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/research/growth_policy/subdivision_staging_policy/2016/

Office Market Study

The Research and Special Projects Division completed its analysis of the regional office market and best practices for next-generation office development. Staff presented these findings to the Planning Board in June 2015, followed presentation in July to the County Council’s Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee.



The study was undertaken in consultation with Washington, DC-based Partners for Economic Solutions (PES). It highlights unprecedented challenges confronting the regional office market, including high and rising vacancies, declining rents, slow absorption and minimal new construction. These trends are evident nationwide as signs of a still recovering economy, but the region also has been hard hit by federal government’s cuts in spending and leasing.

Montgomery County has nearly 11 million square feet of vacant office space, accounting for 15 percent of regional vacancies, compared to Fairfax County’s 28 percent of vacancies. Part of the reason for the office vacancies is that telecommuting, technological advances, more efficient work spaces and practices such as hoteling have enabled tenants to reduce their square footage even as they expand their workforce.

The study shows that office centers located in mixed-use developments with a strong sense of place, a quality environment and good transit connectivity are best positioned to compete. This trend is consistent with recommended land use strategies in recent County plans for White Flint, Bethesda and other communities.

Future office development is likely to occur at a slower pace and be concentrated in prime locations. Not every location will be able to attract new office development or maintain former occupancy levels. Plans for approved but unbuilt suburban office parks may need to be revisited. Some projects already have converted planned office space to residential or other uses, but redirecting development capacity to more competitive locations should be considered. Zoning impediments to redevelopment and diversification should be removed.

These findings and recommendations will guide upcoming Master Plans, especially the newly launched Master Plan for the Rock Spring area east of Montgomery Mall and certain areas affected by the White Flint 2 Sector Plan. View the full Office Market Assessment Report:

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/research/officestudy.shtm>

Rental Housing Study

Providing the appropriate housing stock and necessary infrastructure needed to meet the demand for affordable housing in the County is a challenge. With Council approval, the Department's Research and Special Projects Division (RSP), in collaboration with the Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), launched a rental housing study in April 2015 to assess how the County can best meet the needs of residents across the income spectrum. The study is being conducted by RKG Associates, Inc. of Alexandria, Virginia, and the project contract is managed by the Planning Department.



With input from an Advisory Committee, composed of housing experts and advocates, the study will determine the factors contributing to increasing housing costs; identify best practices that could be implemented to help preserve the existing affordable rental housing stock; and provide recommendations to increase the availability of rental housing units to a wide spectrum of County residents.

In addition, potential changes to current policies and programs will be recommended to help guarantee long-term affordability of rental housing. The recommendations of the rental housing are scheduled to be prepared by summer 2016. Find out more about the Rental Housing Study:

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/research/housing/rental_housing_study/

Recreation Guidelines

The Planning Department is revising the existing Recreation Guidelines, last adopted in 1992, in response to the County's demographic changes and need for more urban-style recreation space in mixed-use developments around transit centers.

The revised Recreation Guidelines, scheduled for completion in spring 2016, will be used during the review of site plans required in the new Zoning Ordinance.



They will provide an expanded list of recreation facilities and help determine the appropriate private recreational facilities to serve a variety of age groups, from small children to seniors, through a flexible point system. This system was originally designed for low density residential developments, and it included only a limited list of facilities, such as small tot lots, tennis courts and play fields.

The new Recreation Guidelines will expand the list of facilities to include rooftop areas, indoor fitness centers, community gardens and urban plazas. The revised guidelines will result in a more effective recreation plan for each site instead of a recreation plan that only meets the required points. They will encourage a wide range of design solutions for recreation spaces and improve the quality of development in Montgomery County.

Retail Trends Study

The world of shopping at bricks-and-mortar stores has changed as a result of competition from e-commerce sites, changing consumer preferences and structural changes in retailers' size and locations. Nationally, this shift has led retailers to reduce the overall number of stores and their sizes, while increasing their operating efficiency.

Retailers are also looking to expand into urban markets and have reduced their interest in many, except for the best, suburban locations. At the same time, retailers are shrinking store footprints and designing smaller stores to suit urban locales - with many being half the size of a typical suburban store. Urban and high-value suburban locations, or dominant grocery-anchored centers are expected to perform well, but many others may languish and get repurposed.

These changes and trends will affect not only the way retailing occurs in Montgomery County and influence the expected performance of existing and planned stores and shopping areas, it will also open up opportunities to transform older poorly performing shopping areas.

Given Montgomery County's focus on creating more urban and mixed-use environments, it is important to understand the implications of such emerging retail trends and how those influence the County's economic position and competitiveness. These trends will help guide and focus our planning efforts to areas where opportunities for change are expected and possible, and temper land use decisions to more closely reflect expectations.

Currently, a request for proposals is being prepared to solicit consultant help in analyzing retail trends. The upcoming Retail Trends Study will address the market forces changing the retail market;

discuss existing retail conditions in Montgomery County; describe the County's retail market within a regional context; and develop strategies for future retail growth in the County.

Master Plan Reality Check

Many Master and Sector Plans for Montgomery County have been monitored and evaluated in the past – an important step in the rational planning process. However, this step is frequently overlooked, due to time constraints and competing priorities, among other reasons.

The Department is refocusing on this effort to gauge how well Master Plans have been implemented and if they lived up to expectations. Data and performance indicators can also help tell if anticipated change, such as transportation impacts, materialized as expected and how effectively priority planning initiatives worked. With the results of a master plan reality check, these types of questions can be better answered. A plan monitoring and evaluation process can also test traditional assumptions and determine if any should be modified based on indicators and past performance, shaping the direction for future planning efforts in the County.

The task of selecting the Master Plans to be analyzed has just begun. We expect to select about 10 plans whose time horizons have been achieved and develop indicators to measure the outcomes within the planning areas. These plans will then be analyzed as to the actual development and conditions on the ground as compared to the plan's expected outcome. The study will be conducted over a period of 18 months.

Co-location of Public Facilities Study

The Planning Department is undertaking research aimed at helping County government agencies share key public assets to save resources and fulfill the county's broader policy goals. The recent economic downturn has been viewed in many jurisdictions as a wake-up call for the way government agencies provide parks, schools, libraries, community centers and other public spaces. In addition, there is less vacant land available for these needed facilities now that the County is largely built-out.

Just as mixing commercial and residential uses is becoming the norm for new development in Montgomery County, combining public uses in one location could be similarly productive. The initial research included examples of public facilities colocation throughout the region and nationally; determined potential partnerships to help share resources and generate cost-savings for site development; and identified existing publicly owned sites and developed a process to prepare plans and implementation strategies.

The consulting firm Bolan Smart Associates, Inc. is under contract to undertake the study as a follow-up to its "white paper" prepared earlier this year. The Planning Department will extend the study to include police and fire stations, libraries and neighborhood services centers, as well as schools. This effort will involve different public agencies and private sector stakeholders.

Design Excellence Initiative

As one of the country's wealthiest and most educated counties, Montgomery County deserves neighborhoods, public spaces and buildings of the highest quality design to reflect this prosperity and knowledge, and maintain a competitive edge within our region. Design excellence is becoming

increasingly important as the amount of available land for development in the County is shrinking and densities in our centers are increasing. These development challenges present a greater need to create attractive, safe and sustainable places to live, work and play.

Our Design Excellence Initiative gained momentum in the spring with the June 2015 launch of the Planning Department's first Design Excellence Award competition. Built projects in the County were submitted in August and a jury of architects, landscape architect and urban designers convened in September to judge the entries. The winner will be announced at an awards celebration on October 22, 2015 that is co-sponsored with the Potomac Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The goal of the competition is to publicize high quality design already established in the County and offer an inspiring model for developers, building owners and communities to follow.



Next steps in continuing the Design Excellence Initiative include the creation of the Director's Advisory Panel to advise the Planning Director and staff on design-related decisions and an update of the Planning Department's design guidelines process. Learn more about the Design Excellence Initiative: www.montgomeryplanning.org/design

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Headquarters in Wheaton

Corresponding with our work on Design Excellence, the Planning Department is closely involved in the architectural, site and office layout designs for our new Wheaton headquarters. In collaboration with developer Stonebridge Carras and Gensler Architects, we have completed the preliminary and schematic design for the building and plaza; layout of individual floor continued this summer.



The developer and County are pursuing the feasibility of a geothermal heating and cooling system for the building. If found practical and cost-effective, the system may advance the overall design and construction of the building from a LEED Gold rating to a LEED Platinum rating for new construction. Our new headquarters could become one of the only LEED Platinum-certified civic buildings in the County and perhaps the only one in the State of Maryland.

Regulatory Initiatives

A major function of the Planning Department is the processing and tracking of all development applications submitted to the Department. Here is a summary of major trends during FY 15:

- Number of development applications is lower than FY 14, primarily because of fewer building permit reviews (see note below Exhibit 1).



- Number of natural resource inventories/forest stand delineations is slightly higher in FY 15 than in FY 14.
- Number of new site plan applications has decreased and amendments to previously approved plans outpace new applications.
- Average review times for record plats approved in FY 15 that were submitted and reviewed with ePlans take one-third the time as the paper submissions approved in FY 14.

The types of regulatory projects being reviewed are changing from greenfields/single-family projects to infill/mixed-use. Site plans may be fewer, but they are generally for bigger and more complex developments. Many exciting major projects have been reviewed and approved over the past six months, including the following:

Clarksburg Town Center, Clarksburg



Ripley East, Silver Spring



Elizabeth Square, Silver Spring



8008 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda



Chevy Chase Lake, Chevy Chase



Regulatory Metrics

Plat and Plan Approvals

Exhibit 1. Plans Accepted by Application Type and Fiscal Year			
Application Type	FY 13	FY 14	FY 15
Development Applications	466	438	446
Record Plats	155	161	130
Special Exceptions	24	6	17
Mandatory Referrals	40	52	31
Building Permits	1,468	1,669	1,197*
TOTAL	2,153	2,326	1,821

*The number of building permit applications forwarded to the Planning Department for review decreased in FY 15. This reduction is the result of a greater understanding by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) as to those permits needing Planning Department review. In years past, the Planning Department received some building permits that did not require our review and recent coordination with DPS has corrected this situation.

Exhibit 2. Number of Plans Accepted ¹ with a Final Decision ² by Application Type						
Application Type	FY 13		FY 14		FY 15	
	Accepted	Final Decision	Accepted	Final Decision	Accepted	Final Decision
Development Applications	466	341	438	368	446	344
Record Plats	155	160	161	79	130	140
Special Exceptions	24	20	6	2	17	3
Mandatory Referrals	40	29	52	20	31	27
Building Permits	1,468	1,602	1,669	1,730	1,197	1,302
TOTAL	2,153	2,152	2,326	2,199	1,821	1,816
1. "Accepted" refers to number of new plans submitted and accepted as complete. 2. "Final Decision" refers to plans approved, denied or forwarded with a recommendation to other branches of County government, and plans that were approved, denied or not confirmed by staff.						

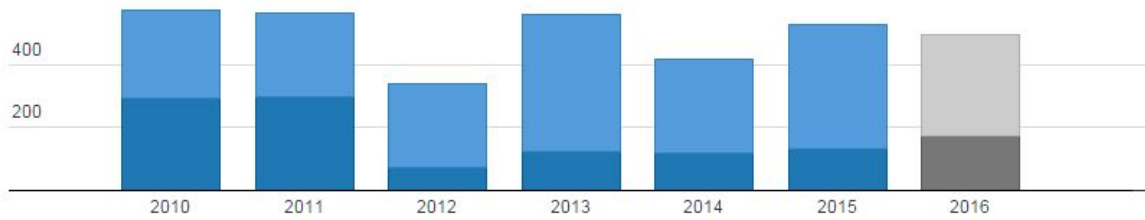
Exhibit 3. Detailed Information on Review Times for Plats Approved in Fiscal Year 2015					
Plats	Number Approved	Average Review Time in Calendar Days	Median Review Time in Calendar Days	% of Average Review Time by Gov't Agencies	% of Average Review Time by Applicants
Pre-ePlan Review	108	544	369	NA ¹	NA ¹
Post-ePlan Review	32	160	174	56	44
1. The 108 non-ePlans reviewed plats were not tracked as closely in the Hansen database as were other plan types, such as preliminary and site plans. The only information available is the number of calendar days from the date of Planning Department acceptance of the plat application to the final decision. As such, the information does not track the amount of time allocated to agency reviews versus time spent by applicants.					

It is difficult for staff to speculate as to why it took so long for the plats submitted prior to the implementation of ePlans to be approved; however, some of the plats approved in fiscal year 2015 were submitted in 2005 and 2007 before the last economic decline occurred.

[Get the data](#)

Review Time for Major Preliminary Plan Applications

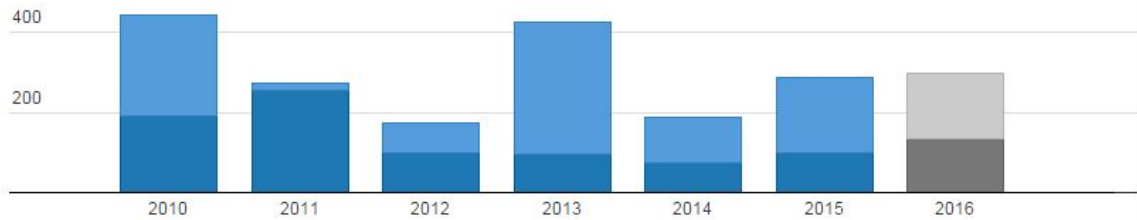
■ Staff Review ■ Applicant Delay ■ Projected Staff Review ■ Projected Applicant Delay



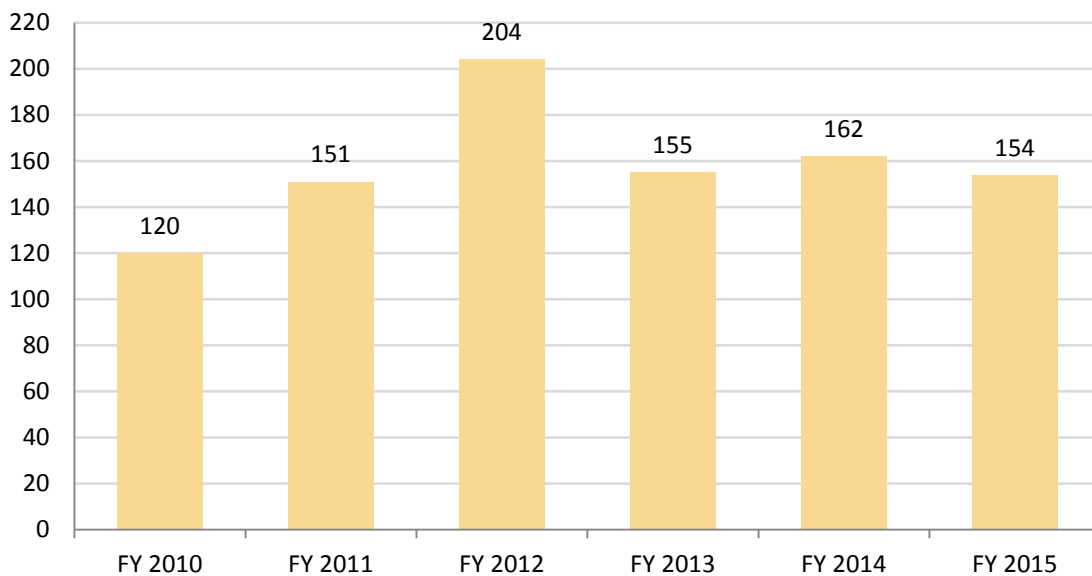
[Get the data](#)

Review Time for Major Site Plan Applications

■ Staff Review ■ Applicant Delay ■ Projected Staff Review ■ Projected Applicant Delay

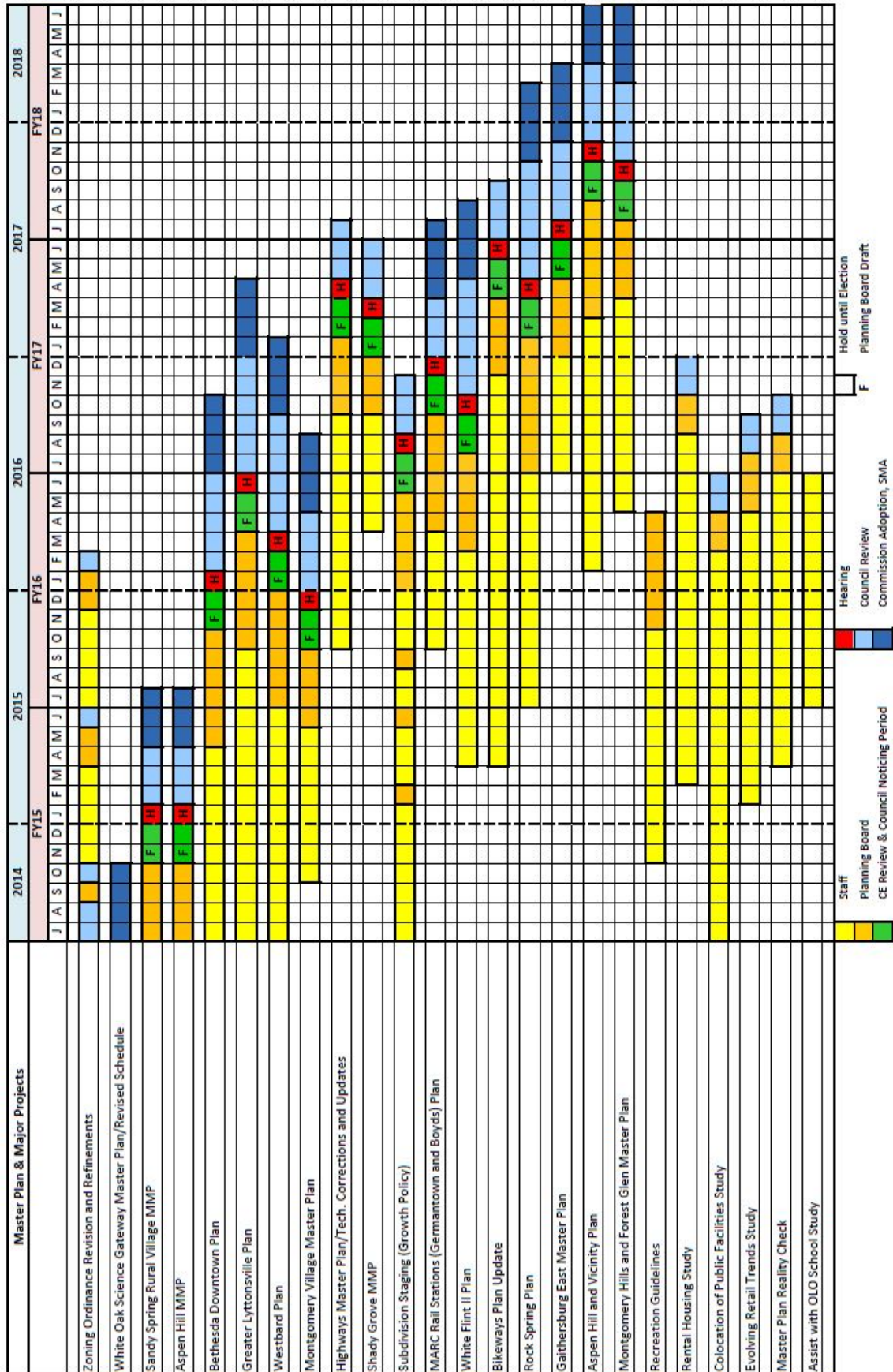


Submitted Record Plats, July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2015



FY16 Adopted Master Plan and Major Projects Schedule

October 2015



Montgomery County Department of Parks

Introduction

Montgomery Parks manages more than 36,000 acres of parkland, consisting of 416 parks, more than 27,000 acres of open and environmental preservation area, and dozens of facilities, programs and events. We take pride in what we do – but more importantly, in what we do to serve the residents of Montgomery County.

The past six months have been busy in our parks. We've hosted thousands of people at our spring and fall festivals, welcomed hundreds of children to our increasingly successful summer camps and launched a new registration system with the Department of Recreation.

We've made impressive progress in the construction and renovation of several major parks and facilities, and will be thrilled to host an opening celebration for Germantown Town Center Urban Park in October 2015 – and welcome back the Garden of Lights at Brookside Gardens. We've also made great progress activating and planning for urban parks, assessing athletic field conditions and determining how to better plan for future needs, and improving and maintaining our trails while working on a comprehensive amendment to the Countywide Park Trails Plan.

At the same time, we are committed to improving what we offer to County residents and to finding new and improved ways to manage our parks and facilities. I invite you to read through the highlights of our work over the last six months below, and look forward to your feedback and ideas for continued success.

Updates on Department Priorities

In spring 2015, we established three major priorities for Montgomery Parks: Urban Parks, Trails and Athletic Fields. Other long-term priorities for the Department include Americans with Disabilities Act/Program Access; Park & Facility Maintenance; Archaeology and History-Based Programming; Deer Management; Property Management and the Montgomery Parks Foundation. We have worked diligently on these initiatives over the past six months and are eager to share our accomplishments with you.

Urban Parks

Urban Park Activation

Activating parks in densely populated areas of Montgomery County is a priority. In addition to serving as open space for a large population of residents, urban parks can also provide a common space for communities to gather, meet one another and enjoy time spent outdoors. While Montgomery Parks offers programming in ice rinks, tennis centers, nature centers, public gardens, historic sites and other facilities, most urban parks do not feature planned programs or activities.

The following activation events were held in spring and summer 2015:

- **Touch a Truck** was held at Wall Park on Friday, April 10, 2015. Hundreds of children and their families attended the event, where they were invited to climb on and explore more than 15 pieces of equipment used by Operations Park staff to build and maintain M-NCPCC Parks. Operations Park staffers were on-hand to teach participants more about the Park system.
- **Dig and Draw** was held at Ellsworth Urban Park on Saturday June 6, 2015. Families were invited to help plant a butterfly garden in previously underutilized planting beds. In addition, participants were encouraged to adorn the sidewalks surrounding the plantings with chalk art. Attendees were encouraged to come back to visit the garden throughout the summer to help with the weeding and to enjoy the butterflies. To date, multiple species of butterflies and other pollinators have been spotted in the garden.
- **Sharks in the Park** was held on Thursday, July 2, 2015 at Woodside Urban Park, in partnership with Discovery Communications. Approximately 200 visitors enjoyed a watching old and new Shark Week episodes, including the 2015 Shark Week season premiere on a large screen under the stars.
- **Wall Park cookouts:** Grill Nights were held on the third Tuesday of June, July and August 2015 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Wall Park in Bethesda. The Friends of White Flint and Montgomery Parks co-sponsored the event. Local organizations provided support for a live band each evening, snacks and drinks, and supplies for making s'mores. Additionally, a large grill was provided for attendees to grill their own food. Dozens of residents enjoyed attending the events and connecting with neighbors at the park.
- **Future activation events:** We are currently having conversations with Black Rock Center and Montgomery County Library in Germantown regarding their use of the Germantown Town Center Park and the potential to partner with them on events that will help activate urban parks.

In addition to hosting events, staff working on urban park activation has also coordinated improvements that enable park visitors to actively use urban parks on a daily basis. Those improvements include:

- **Checker and Chess** pieces have been provided in mesh bags in Ellsworth Urban Park to encourage visitors to play on the existing game board tables in the park. Ideas like this are a step toward fostering further activation through community inspired initiatives. Additional game boards and playing pieces will be placed in Woodside Urban Park and Elm Street Urban Park.
- **Existing recreational amenities** were restored to playable condition in Woodside Urban Park. An aging ping pong table was resurfaced, and both this and the shuffle boards were given a fresh coat of paint. Equipment for playing these games is now permanently available in the park for patrons to use whenever they come to visit. Temporary cameras installed to capture the usage of these amenities identified a diversity of users and timeframes of use.
- **Movable tables and chairs** have been installed in Woodside Urban Park to provide additional opportunities for visitors to congregate where they wish. The goal is to give patrons the opportunity to customize their use of park amenities.
- **Heart Smart Trail** will be installed at Wall Park. Heart Smart Trails are generally 1-mile in length or less and follow a hard surface, level path. Bronze medallions are embedded in the path every 1/10 of a mile so walkers can keep track of the distance they have traveled and red hearts will be emblazoned along the route to show the way.

- **Outdoor exercise equipment** is being updated at Wall Park and replacement equipment has been selected. To better align with the current usage of the site by the Shriver Aquatic Center, the selected exercise equipment caters to a swimmer's workout while also providing well-balanced exercise options for all users. The equipment that was selected qualifies the exercise loop for registration as a national demonstration site. As part of a national registry, these sites are promoted actively to other communities wishing to offer appropriate outdoor fitness for adults.
- **Informational kiosks** will be installed within Wall Park to highlight the park's amenities and direct patrons to them. The kiosks will also provide information on the nearby Josiah Henson Special Park, which is only a 5-minute walk from Wall Park. Visitors to special events at Josiah Henson Special Park currently use Wall Park for parking. These kiosks will provide an opportunity to reach these people as well as the public who may be unaware of this unique resource.

Urban Park Activation Events a Success!



Urban Dig and Draw



Sharks in the Park



Urban Park Touch a Truck



Wall Park Cookout

Features Designed to Make Urban Parks More Active



Checkers and Chess



Urban Park Exercise Equipment



Urban Park Woodside



Moveable Table and Chairs

Urban Park Planning

Residents, employees and visitors need an attractive and convenient system of parks, trails and open spaces accessible by walking and transit, especially in the densely populated urban areas of Montgomery County. As a result, Montgomery Parks is working diligently to better assess, select sites and plan for urban parks that serve our residents' needs. Some accomplishments related to urban park planning over the past six months include:

Accomplishments

- Networks of park, trail and open space systems accessible by walking and transit are recommended in the drafts of the Bethesda Downtown Plan, Westbard Sector Plan and Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan. Systems in all of these plans promote greener and more connected downtowns, and include central gathering spaces, neighborhood greens and recreational parks, as well as trail networks. Innovative new park spaces proposed in some of these plans include naturalizing urban streams to create greenways with community access to the streams, native

wetland plants and forested areas while also creating critical pedestrian linkages between residents and their destinations.

- We continue to perform site selection studies to identify feasible locations for the most needed urban park amenities. These analyses help guide priorities for funding such as the Urban Parks Elements PDF in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). This funding stream is being used to support the construction of Montgomery Parks' first urban dog park in Ellsworth Urban Park, which will begin this fall.
- We are developing spatial analysis tools to more accurately assess what is needed in each urban Sector Plan area. These tools allow us to map existing parks and facilities and identify where gaps are for walkable facilities such as playgrounds, sport courts and dog parks.
- Proposing innovative ideas learned from successful urban park efforts around the region and country, including constructing a park on top of a privately owned underground parking facility.
- Working with the Planning Department on creative zoning tools for property owners and developers to transfer needed land to the Parks Department in urban Sector Plan areas, such as in the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan.
- Prioritizing renovation of existing urban parks to be more attractive and activated, such as Woodside Urban Park in Silver Spring, Caroline Freeland Urban Park in Bethesda and Kemp Mill Urban Park.
- Recommending changes to the Recreational Guidelines for Residential Development to emphasize the most needed amenities, particularly in urban areas.

Upcoming Needs

As we work to keep planning and activation efforts for urban parks at the forefront of what we do, it is important to recognize areas that may require additional resources.

The renewed focus on urban parks and the new types and preferred locations for urban park amenities mean that the acquisition of additional parkland will be necessary. Much of that new urban parkland will be created through the development review process using both traditional and innovative zoning tools. However, at least some of that new urban parkland will need to be purchased through traditional methods.

Urban parkland can be acquired through two primary funding sources: State-funded Program Open Space (POS) and County-funded Legacy Open Space (LOS). However, combined annual funding for these programs falls far short of that needed to acquire parkland in Montgomery County's urban cores.

Average annual acquisition funding over the past five years is \$4.5 million for all acquisition programs combined (except ALARF), while urban land in our densest communities can cost up to \$5 million to \$10 million per acre. With constrained funding, it is very difficult to achieve the largest desired urban parks, such as Civic Greens and Countywide Urban Recreational Parks. To create the envisioned networks of parks, trails and recreation necessary for desirable urban communities, additional funding for urban park acquisition will need to be provided in the Capital Improvements Program to complement innovative zoning and other tools.

Athletic Fields

Athletic fields are also a focus for Montgomery Parks, as a variety of user groups depend on such fields to play softball, baseball, football, soccer, cricket and other sports. With guidance from the Montgomery County Council, we've identified the following goals for the athletic field program:

- Improve the athletic field user experience in terms of quality of playing surface and safety.
- Increase capacity utilization of fields by improving field quality.
- Increase maintenance efficiency.
- Minimize maintenance costs.

Comprehensive Field Assessment

In an effort to meet these goals, Montgomery Parks is currently working with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and the County's Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) on a comprehensive condition assessment of athletic fields at all M-NCPPC parks and MCPS elementary and middle schools (including seven new elementary school sites that have been added to M-NCPPC's contract for athletic field maintenance). Goals of the assessment include determining the current physical conditions of athletic fields and gaining a better understanding of the relationship between field condition, maintenance treatment and hours of permitted use.

Primary Maintenance Treatments Applied to Park and School Athletic Fields *(listed in order of increasing complexity and cost):*

- A small number of fields are maintained by "adopt-a-field" groups according to a loosely defined and loosely enforced "adopt-a-field" maintenance standards.
- Some school fields receive the "MCPS level" of basic field maintenance.
- Some park fields receive the "local park" level of maintenance.
- Some fields at elementary and middle schools are maintained by M-NCPPC's contractor according to a set of standards similar to M-NCPPC's "local park" standard.
- Some park fields receive the "regional/recreational" level of field maintenance.



Parks staff is evaluating fields at park and school sites using an iPad-based assessment tool that considers various factors, including turf quality, turf coverage, soil compaction, field drainage, the presence or absence of irrigation, and the condition of associated field amenities (e.g., backstops, pitcher's mound, bases, bleachers, etc.). Additionally, CUPF staff provides the hours of permitted use at each field and park staff documents non-permitted athletic field use at select park sites in both the down-County area and the I-270 corridor. Park staff expects to complete the field assessments and subsequent evaluations by the summer of 2016.

Once completed, staff should be well positioned to realign specific maintenance treatments with individual fields receiving the highest level of permitted use, determine maximum thresholds for

permitted use, and determine which park and school fields are the best candidates for future renovations through the Ballfields Improvements PDF in the Capital Improvements Program.

Expanded maintenance contract

In addition to maintaining athletic fields on parkland, Montgomery Parks also is responsible for the contractual maintenance of MCPS fields at select elementary and middle school sites. In fiscal year 2016 (July 2015), the department added seven additional MCPS school sites to its contract, bringing the total of MCPS fields maintained by Montgomery Parks to 75. These sites include 46 of 133 elementary schools and 28 of 38 middle schools, as well as Blake High School.

Cost of Contractual Services on MCPS Fields: The cost of contractual services on the 68 MCPS fields maintained by Montgomery Parks (prior to the addition of seven school sites in FY 2016) totaled \$754,376. The average cost per school was \$11,094 and the average cost per field was \$4,745. The approximate cost for maintaining MCPS fields is \$3,200 per diamond field and \$5,500 per rectangular field.

Seven Fields added to MCPS Contract in FY 2016: A. Mario Loiderman Middle School; Flora M. Singer Elementary School; Great Seneca Creek Elementary School; Sargent Shriver Elementary School; William B. Gibbs Elementary School; Wilson Wims Elementary School; and East Silver Spring Elementary School were added to the contract because fields at each site had either been built new or had been renovated since 2003 (The first year of Montgomery Parks' contractual maintenance of athletic fields at select MCPS sites) and there was fiscal capacity within the Council's appropriation to do so.

Cricket

Montgomery County's population mix is changing and, with it, the demand for different types of sports recreation. Cricket, a relatively new sport in our County, has grown rapidly in popularity. The need for cricket pitch facilities in our park system was brought to our attention by the public. It was confirmed throughout the planning process by the Vision 2030 Strategic Plan and the 2012 Park Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan. The PROS Plan determined the estimated need for dedicated cricket fields large enough to serve all skill levels to be four fields by the year 2022.



In the past, Parks has experimented with a number of different approaches to support the sport of cricket. Based on experiences thus far, Parks has determined the best way to fill the need for cricket fields is to build dedicated cricket fields large enough to safely handle all skill levels under all conditions. An analysis of potential sites for up to four dedicated fields in our park system has been conducted and the Planning Board has approved two locations for future cricket fields.

Approved Locations for Dedicated Cricket Fields: South Germantown Recreational Park (southwest corner of Schaeffer Road and Burdette Lane) will be included in recommended FY 2017-2022 Capital Improvements Program for design and construction. Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park or South Germantown Recreational Park will be chosen, pending property acquisition and a decision by Montgomery County Department of Recreation about facility location.

Future Field Needs

As stated in the 2012 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, Montgomery Parks has been refining a model for predicting future athletic field needs. Department staff has been comparing and contrasting our current method of predicting future athletic field needs with methods used by other jurisdictions. As a result of our research, staff has concluded that:

- Our method for estimating field needs should be consistent with how we estimate all other facility needs, such as playgrounds, tennis courts and picnic shelters (an approach that has been approved by the State of Maryland and is used by both Anne Arundel and Howard Counties).
- We should use data that accurately reflect current participation in athletic field-based sports, such as soccer, lacrosse and baseball.
- The model should be easy to understand and produce reliable results.

Our method of estimating future field needs requires four pieces of accurate information:

- An estimate of the future population of Montgomery County.
- An estimate of how many of our County residents use athletic fields of various types.
- An estimate of how often our residents use fields.
- Current number of athletic fields at park and school sites.

Future field needs are derived by subtracting the existing inventory of fields from the estimated future demand for fields. We have decided to estimate field needs according to three field types:

- Baseball (90-foot baseline and a mound for ages 13+).
- Softball (softball all ages 6+; youth baseball ages 6 to 12).
- Rectangular Field Sports (soccer, lacrosse, football, rugby, field hockey, all ages).

A report by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), “US Trends in Team Sports,” gives us the data we need to estimate future demand. The report contains current national sport participation rates and frequencies to which we can apply Montgomery County population estimates provided by the Montgomery County Planning Department’s Research Division.

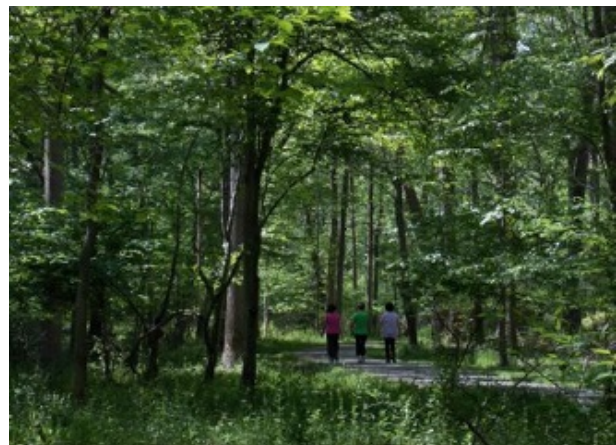
It is important to note that participation in field sports is declining nationally. According to the SFIA, team sports participation declined 11 percent between 2008 and 2012. SFIA estimates that 70 percent of all players drop out of team sports by age 12.

A trend labeled the “marginalization of the recreation player” indicates fewer recreation players in the older age groups. Teens move on to other activities or do not make the cut for school teams or competitive clubs. In addition there are fewer “3 sport kids” than in previous years. In addition, issues such as overuse injury, athletic burnout, safety concerns and higher costs play a role in declining participation. Accordingly, park staff anticipates that fewer additional athletic fields may be needed as a result of the current modeling effort than have been estimated by previous PROS Plans.

That said, our staff does not assume that we have an adequate number of athletic fields throughout Montgomery County. Discussions with field users suggest a long-term shortage in the down-County area and a need to travel (often during the afternoon rush hour) to fields in distant parts of the County for both practice sessions and games.

In addition to the PROS modeling work discussed above, park planners are assessing which fields – especially in the down-County area – may be underutilized. They are determining whether or not specific improvements can be made to these fields that would potentially increase the number of games a field can accommodate as well as the overall satisfaction of field users. Examples of improvements include drainage improvements, turf renovation, irrigation and repairs to backstops and benches.

We expect to complete our initial analysis of future fields in fall 2015 and to share results of that analysis with field users this winter.



Trails

Trails are another priority area for Montgomery Parks, as natural surface and hard surface trails are among the most popular facilities in our park system. Our efforts in this area over the past six months have included continued work to prepare for a comprehensive amendment to the Countywide Trails Plan, efforts to measure the use of the Capital Crescent Trail and work to build, improve and maintain trails within our park system.

Countywide Trails Amendment

The Countywide Park Trails Plan (CWPTP) proposes a network of hard surface and natural surface trails on County parkland. The comprehensive amendment to the Countywide Park Trails Plan aims to update the



methodologies, tools and strategies used for planning and implementing major park trail systems throughout the County resulting in a plan that:

- Is more achievable and sustainable overall.
- Ensures all trails are built as sustainably as possible.
- Serves as many trail users as is feasible and possible.
- Maximizes Levels of Service for future trails based on identified user needs and desires, and based on existing and projected population density calculations.

Our Parks surveys consistently show that park trails are the most popular recreational facilities on county parkland. Thus, it is important that the delivery of park trails be efficient and effective, and meet the largest number of existing and potential trail users as possible. The amendment aims to improve service to our park trail users by connecting countywide park trails to regional and recreational parks, as well as other major destinations such as commercial/employment centers and Metrorail stations. It also delineates gaps in the county's park trail system, and includes strategies for improving trail networks in underserved areas, as well as linkages to key regional bikeways.

A comprehensive outreach campaign regarding the amendment was conducted in late August and early September, and a public meeting was held in mid-September to seek feedback on the plan's new framework, called *Loops and Links*. Staff expects to present the staff draft plan to the Planning Board in December 2015.

Automated Trail Counting on the Capital Crescent Trail: Two Eco-Multi Counters have been installed along the Capital Crescent Trail; one near the Bethesda trailhead (installed November 12, 2014), and the other just south of the Dalecarlia Tunnel (installed on February 12, 2015). The equipment operates around the clock, counting people on bicycle and foot in both directions. Each night, data from the counters are uploaded to a server for tabulation and storage. Montgomery Parks staff has access to the data through an online platform. Highlights from the counter indicate:

- The peak month for trail use was May 2015, with 43,645 people on bicycles and 47,642 people on foot passing the Bethesda counter, and 64,479 people on bicycles and 16,330 people on foot passing the Dalecarlia Tunnel counter.
- Generally, in both locations, the peak day of the week was Sunday, with peak hours during 1 to 3 p.m.
- The ratio of people on bicycles to people on foot at Bethesda is generally 50:50.
- The ratio of people on bicycles to people on foot at Dalecarlia Tunnel is generally 80:20, with bicyclists outnumbering pedestrians 4 to 1.
- When counting trail users—particularly people on bicycles—before and after snow events – to determine the effectiveness of our snow clearing program, data show that trail use did not rise significantly following snow clearing. We believe this is at least partially attributable to very cold temperatures following each snow event this past winter. However, we cannot accurately determine trends in trail use before and/or after snow events because only one counter was in place in advance of the snow season.

Natural Surface Trail Construction and Renovation

Over the past six months, the Natural Surface Construction and Major Renovation program has completed several projects, including three bridges, two new trails (Hillandale Loop Trail and Diabase Trail), which have provided much needed connections between communities and resource-based recreation opportunities.



Along with brand new trails, we spent significant time renovating existing systems, including:

- Rerouting three sections, which total close to 1 mile, of the Seneca Creek Greenway trail.
- Rerouting 0.25 miles of trail and new bridge along the Muddy Branch Greenway trail.
- Rerouting close to .5 miles of the Browning Run Trail in Little Bennett Regional Park.
- Replacing three bridges along various trails in Little Bennett Regional Park, Meadowside Nature Center and Rock Creek Regional Park.
- Reclaiming and naturalizing approximately 0.8 miles of abandoned trails, using reforestation trees from Pope Farm.
- Completing construction on the 1.3 mile Sopers Branch Trail in Little Bennett Regional Park; the trail officially opened in spring 2015.



Upcoming Projects

- **Trail mapping:** Improvements to accuracy of trail mapping, with a Term Contract Position that will utilize cutting-edge GIS technology. This technology will also be used to report trail problems and provide exact locations so our maintenance staff can respond to issues more efficiently.
- **Ten Mile Creek Road/Route 121 Natural Surface Trail:** Consideration of a new 6-mile trail that will connect MD Route 121 to Ten Mile Creek Road along the western shore of Little Seneca Lake in Black Hill Regional Park. This multi-year effort will include significant volunteer effort and support.
- **Wheaton Claridge Natural Surface Trail System:** Implementation of the Wheaton Claridge trail system. This natural surface trail system is located in an urban area that is underserved when it comes to resource-based recreation.
- **Little Bennett Regional Park Natural Surface Trail System:** Continuation of work in Little Bennett Regional Park and the major renovation that is being done to that 27-mile trail system.
- **North Branch/Upper Rock Creek Trail Loop Natural Surface Trail:** Begin building in North Branch of Rock Creek behind the Kengla House. This trail will help to complete the Upper Rock Creek Trail Loop identified in the Countywide Park Trails Plan.

Volunteers Help Make Natural Surface Trails Improvements Possible: The Natural Surface Trails Program relies heavily on volunteers. Below is a summary of the volunteer program and the impact it has made over the past six months:

- More than 494 volunteers completed 2,759 hours of work on natural surface trails.
- Volunteer Trail Rangers completed more than 124 trail inspections.
- 35 volunteer trail work day projects.
- 19 weekend trail work days, 8 of which were led by volunteer crew leaders.
- 4 corporate volunteer trail work day projects.
- 5 Boy Scouts achieved the rank of Eagle Scout by completing trail work projects.
- Five-day Trail Crew Leader Workskills training session in June 2015 was held along the Cabin John Trail and conducted by the Student Conservation Association (SCA).

Hard Surface Trails

Over the past six months, work on hard surface trails has included coordination on trails in Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) corridors, construction of a section of the Clarksburg-Greenway Hard Surface Trail, renovations of the Rock Creek Trail in Rock Creek Stream Valley Unit 3, signage installation on the Rock Creek Trail and design and funding of the North Branch Trail.

- **Trails in PEPCO Corridors:** Montgomery Parks' staff has been coordinating with PEPCO, Montgomery County government and Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE) to facilitate a pilot trail project in PEPCO's corridor through Potomac, from Westlake Terrace to South Germantown Recreational Park. The pilot trail project is a Maryland Public Service Commission condition of approval for PEPCO's merger with Exelon. The trail will offer trail service in an area of the County generally underserved by official, sanctioned trails. It will cross two stream valley parks and one state park, connect many of the County's natural surface park trails and link two regional/recreational parks.
- **Clarksburg-Greenway Hard Surface Trail:** The section of the trail From Horseshoe Bend Circle to Little Seneca Parkway is being completed by the developer. The final small section connecting to Stringtown Road is under technical review.
- **Pine Lake Trail:** Design is now complete for the Pine Lake Trail project in Wheaton Regional Park. It will provide a 0.5-mi contiguous paved asphalt trail between the Shorefield Area and the Dog Park/Sportsplex. The project will be bid in fall 2015 and the trail is expected to open by fall 2016.
- **North Branch Trail** design continues. Thanks to assistance from the Montgomery Parks Foundation, a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant totaling \$2 million was awarded to support the construction of this trail.

Renovation of the Rock Creek Trail in Rock Creek Stream Valley Unit 3: The Facilities Management (FM) and Park Development Divisions (PDD) have partnered to develop a new approach to trail renovation that works to reduce time frame for design, adapt construction methods to respond to changing site conditions and incorporate environmental enhancements with drainage improvements. This field engineering approach is currently being implemented along the trail segment between Connecticut Avenue and Cedar Lane with the goal of completing paving work ahead of the annual Parks Half Marathon.

By working together to adjust trail alignment, slope and elevation during construction, we are able to improve pavement stability, meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and reduce ponding after storms. A second segment will be paved between Cedar Lane and North Franklin Street before the asphalt plants close for the winter.

Environmental enhancements, including sediment removal, excessive pavement removal, riparian drainage enhancements and floodplain naturalization, will be constructed over the winter ahead of the spring growing season. We are looking to apply this approach to other portions of the trail, so we can cost-effectively improve the overall trail user experience while enhancing the ecological conditions of our Stream Valley Parks.



Trail Assessment: In the second half of FY 15, we created a Trail Inspection Collector to assess our Hiker Biker trail system. The ESRI application allowed for a quick evaluation of the Hiker Biker trail system and provides a snapshot of the existing conditions of the trail systems. The data collection and preliminary assessment were completed in August 2015. Staff is currently proofing the data collected and intends to link this data to enterprise asset management (EAM) software. This assessment has allowed us to identify (locate) existing culverts under the trails, rank the condition of segments of the trail from best to worst, and determine locations along the trail that may need immediate attention due to hazardous conditions or risk to the users. The result will also assist staff to develop an approach, schedule, and budget for renovating poorly rated trail segments.

Rock Creek Trail Signage: New signage is currently being installed along the Rock Creek Hiker-Biker Trail to improve general navigation and safety. Completion of the sign installation is expected in mid-October 2015. The Rock Creek Hiker-Biker Trail is a 14-mile hard surface trail that extends from Lake Needwood in Rock Creek Regional Park south to the District of Columbia line.

Signage installation will generally occur along the main trail, adjacent neighborhood connector trails, at all roadway crossings, and at all trail entry and exit points. In addition, mileage marker signs will be provided at every half-mile along the main trail. This project also included development of a Trail Signage Design Manual that will be used as a standard for future hard surface trail signage improvement projects in the Montgomery Parks Hard Surface Trail System.

Return on Investments

Over the past several years, Montgomery Parks has received funding to support important initiatives, including water quality protection, tree maintenance along parkways and trails, and a consolidated registration system for classes and facilities offered by Montgomery Parks, Montgomery County Recreation and Community Use of Public Facilities. The County Council's support has provided us the opportunity to make large strides in each of these areas, as outlined below.

Consolidated Registration System with Montgomery County Department of Recreation and Community Use of Public Facilities

Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) worked collaboratively over the past several years to identify a system that could meet our needs. CUPF helped to update business practices and procedures to facilitate use of the new system, identify how transactions would be processed and payments allocated between agencies, and communicate with current and potential customers about the launch of the new system.

In August 2015, Montgomery Parks and the Montgomery County Recreation Department successfully launched ActiveMONTGOMERY, a consolidated registration system that's allows people to register for activities and reserve facilities offered by both agencies through one website and account.

We anticipate that facilities and fields available through the Community Use of Public Facilities office will be added to ActiveMONTGOMERY later this fall or winter.

Introducing ActiveMONTGOMERY: In August 2015, ActiveMONTGOMERY was launched, creating one website and system that simplifies the process of finding, registering for and/or reserving activities and facilities for park and recreation customers. Visitors to the new ActiveMONTGOMERY.org website can easily browse hundreds of upcoming classes and activities offered by both agencies, check the availability of facilities and reserve picnic shelters, park activity buildings, campsites, garden plots and more.

Tree Maintenance Program for Parkway and Paved Hiker/Biker Trails

Tree maintenance along parkways and paved hiker/biker trails is essential to protecting the safety of parkway and trail users. As reported in the spring 2015 Semi-Annual Report, additional funding provided in FY 14 allowed tree inspections and work to be completed in the following areas:

- Little Falls Parkway between Massachusetts Avenue and Fairfax Road.
- Sligo Creek Parkway and Hiker Biker Trail Units 1 (Chaney Drive to the DC Line) and 2 (Piney Branch to Route 29).
- Wheaton Regional Park, Shorefield entrance.
- Rock Creek Regional Park Hiker/Biker Trail from Dewey Local Park to the DC line.

In FY 15, additional funding was provided to support this program. This funding supported the removal of dead, diseased and hazard trees and limbs at the following locations:

- Capital Crescent Trail from Woodmont Avenue in Bethesda to the DC line.

- Black Hill paved hiker biker trails around the lake and the regional park entrance road.
- A section of Rock Creek paved hiker/biker trails, in the Rock Creek Management Area.
- Great Seneca Stream Valley Park at Brink, Davis Mill, Wild Cat and Hunt Master Roads.
- Wheaton train tracks and picnic areas.
- Cabin John train tracks.
- Paint Branch paved hiker/biker trails.
- Matthew Henson paved hiker/biker trails.
- Needwood Road near entrance to Rock Creek Park.
- Olney Manor at Georgia Avenue.

Importantly, the increased funding from both FY 14 and FY 15 has allowed us to reduce backlogged tree maintenance requests, helped us conduct tree risk assessments and identify hazard trees, limbs and other safety concerns in 60 percent (333 parks) that contain amenities, and assisted our staff in being able to remove 842 trees that were identified as dead, diseased or high-risk.

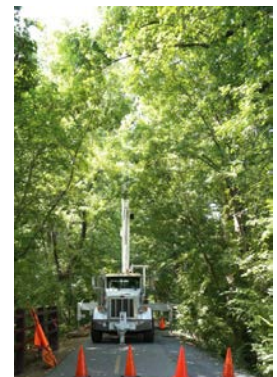
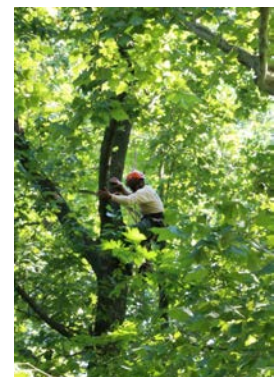
Capital Crescent Trail Improvement Project: This summer, Montgomery Parks' temporarily shut down sections of the Capital Crescent Trail in order to remove dead trees and limbs, making the trail safer for our users. Trail users were detoured around temporary closures while staff worked to move equipment onto the trail and perform this work.

Water Quality Initiatives: MS4 Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit

Program Overview

In 2011, Montgomery Parks received dedicated funding and staff to implement a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. This support has enabled the Department to make great strides in fulfilling permit requirements for construction site runoff control, post construction stormwater management, public involvement, personnel education and more. Highlights of what we've been able to accomplish thanks to this support include:

- Ensuring that staff with the specialized skills, knowledge and necessary training are properly maintaining 485 stormwater management facilities and 45 farm ponds located on parkland. Non-structural maintenance requirements primarily involve mowing, weeding, non-native invasive plant removal and removal of storm debris, sediment and accumulated trash.
- Decreasing the number of work orders currently open from the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.
- Completing projects designed to eliminate or provide treatment for impervious surfaces on parkland and partnering with external agencies to incorporate stormwater treatment facilities into planned projects on parkland.



- Significantly increase the number of park and stream cleanups and other volunteer efforts related to improved water quality.
- Create a partnership with the Bridgestone Tires4ward Tire Recycling Program, which has facilitated the disposal of tires from park and stream cleanups, and cleanups of historic tire dumping sites located on parkland.
- Offer personnel training, including classroom-style presentations, field workshops and written materials to educating park staff about natural resources and the environment.
- Increased coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP) in support of both Parks' Phase II permit as well as the County's Phase I permit.



Underused Parking Lot Becomes Wetland Ecosystem: An 10,000 square-foot underutilized parking lot within the Rock Creek Watershed was recently removed and naturalized, creating a valuable habitat for a number of species, including Eastern American toads, crayfish, turtles, insects and birds. This project turned a maintenance “headache” and underutilized space into an environmental amenity that both enhances the area and serves as a cost-effective stormwater treatment area for the remaining (and well-used) parking lot.

Partnering to Provide Stormwater Treatment Facilities: Montgomery Parks regularly looks for ways to incorporate stormwater treatment facilities into planned projects on parkland. For instance, Montgomery Parks has partnered with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to install bioswales and other environmental improvements while MCDOT works to replace a number of culverts along Sligo Creek Parkway. Partnering with external agencies, including MCDOT, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, State Highway Administration and Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, on planned projects allows us to leverage common watershed goals and construction efforts to provide cost-effective solutions that minimize negative impacts on our parks, natural resources and residents.



Increased Coordination with Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection: This coordination has enabled the expedited and streamlined review of stormwater management facility and stream restoration projects by MCDEP on parkland. Additionally, we've worked together to fulfill both agencies' Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) program requirements in an efficient matter and promote opportunities for resident outreach and engagement regarding water quality and environmental issues.



Create a partnership with the Bridgestone Tires 4ward Tire Recycling Program, which has facilitated the disposal of tires from volunteer park and stream clean-ups, and cleanups of historic tire dumping sites located on parkland.



Volunteer clean-up of an historic tire dump

Increased Coordination with Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection:



Henry Coppola at Countywide Environmental Outreach Event



Lisa Feldt, Director of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, and Montgomery Parks' Woody the Tree at the GreenFest.

Updates on Important Initiatives

Of critical importance for the Department of Parks are updates on our work related to the Americans with Disabilities Act, maintenance of parks and facilities, pesticides, archaeology and history-based programming, the Montgomery Parks Foundation and deer management.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Buildings and Facilities Updates

In conjunction with Montgomery County, Montgomery Parks entered into a Settlement Agreement with the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2011. This agreement requires that Montgomery Parks evaluates its system for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Requirements include (but are not limited to) constructed improvements at 19 parks specified by DOJ; a phased self-evaluation of all 416 parks, submission of yearly interim transition plans, and a Final Transition Plan submitted no later than August 2016.

All barriers to accessibility, both physical and programmatic, are to be identified and a plan of action (or Transition Plan) must be developed to remove impediments to accessibility. A primary goal of the Settlement Agreement is that all services, opportunities and programs offered by the Department are accessible to all individuals with disabilities.

To date, Montgomery Parks has made substantial progress complying with the terms of the Settlement Agreement. Self-evaluations of all parks were completed almost an entire year ahead of schedule, with 13,700 barriers to accessibility identified with a total estimated removal cost of \$48 million, assuming all barriers are removed. However, certain barriers will likely remain in place in a percentage of recurring amenities (fields, playgrounds, courts) and in locations where barriers are technically infeasible or subject to environmental restrictions. The predominance of funding to support barrier removal is expected to come from Capital Improvements Program funding efforts and the Department's operating budget.

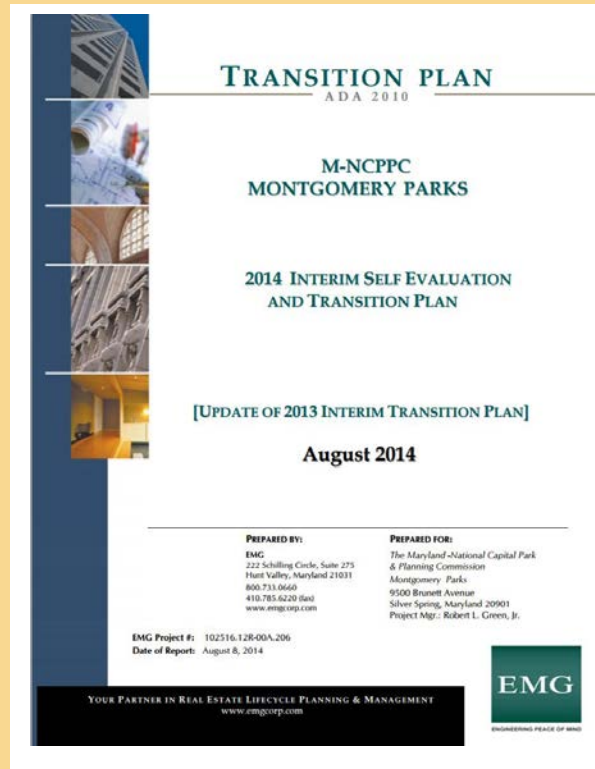
Barrier Removal in Montgomery Parks: Barrier removal efforts have been ongoing since 2012. To date, various ADA improvements have been completed at more than 40 parks in our system. These improvements include everything from parking lot rehabilitations and amenity renovations to replacing door knobs, faucets and signage. Construction improvements have been completed at 16 of the 19 parks identified by DOJ.

All data collected by our consultants is housed in a single database, which is fully integrated with the department's enterprise asset management system. Prioritization of all parks within our system has been completed, and the strategy of barrier removals was identified to provide a roadmap for future work in our park system. The final Transition Plan, due in 2016, will reflect all efforts to date, outline the strategy to bring the park system into full compliance with the ADA, summarize the anticipated cost for barrier removals, and develop a timeline for barrier removals.

Systematic Benefits of Accessibility Work: The ADA is a federal civil rights law and Montgomery Parks is committed to the spirit and

intent of the law. We have found, however, that this program provides more than just curb ramps and parking spaces. The ADA program integrates well with other ongoing Parks programs. All citizens using our park system benefit from new walkways, increased accessibility and upgrades to existing amenities.

One example of the benefits of the ADA program is the work we have done at Argyle Local Park. Accessibility upgrades were required for the existing tennis courts, basketball courts, play area, and activity building. The park has been enhanced and improved with new walkways to these amenities, a new basketball court, a reduction in impervious service, a newly constructed parking lot, more efficient parking, an improved drainage system, and stormwater management provisions that did not exist before. In addition to the requirements and minimum standards for accessible design, the Department is looking to improve other amenities not covered by the ADA, such as trails and campgrounds.



Program Access Updates

The Program Access Office was launched in February 2015 to coordinate, provide and manage ADA modifications for individuals with disabilities so that they can successfully be included in Countywide parks and leisure programs. Modifications provided through the Program Access Office include trained support staff, volunteer companions, large print and Braille materials, assisted listening devices, sign language interpreters, adaptive equipment, audio descriptions, continued monitoring of ADA compliance and development and implementation of staff training materials covering disability and modification issues.

From March through June 30, 2015, the Program Access Office staff has coordinated the following modifications:

- 13 individuals with disabilities were paired with a specialized and trained support staff in programs and day camps.
- 4 individuals with disabilities without direct support staff received accommodations as needed by program staff.
- 22 noted individuals with disabilities were in programs without support staff or an accommodation unless needed.



Program Access Office staff acted as a resource to assist staff as needed.

In addition, the Program Access Office is developing a 5-year strategic plan that includes:

- Responsible fiscal management (sound funding source).
- Personnel management (seasonal and contractual staff).
- Marketing plan.
- Educational and training program for all Parks staff.

Program Access Making a Difference for Customers: Recently, I signed up my son, who has autism for a group lesson at Cabin John Ice Rink. My son has been skating since a very young age, but due to his disability, he was not previously able to participate in group lessons and follow the instructions. When I reached out to Montgomery Parks, I found the staff eager to help. The Program Access Office staff provided an initial comprehensive form for describing and understanding the nature of my son's disability, and provided the opportunity for me to provide tips on working with him. This was an important step in familiarizing staff with my son's disability. The Program Access staff also acted as a liaison between me and the staff at Cabin John Ice Rink, ensuring we addressed and resolved any concerns quickly. The assistants assigned to my son remained calm and supportive throughout each session and regularly complimented my son on his achievements. The Program Access Office played a crucial role in coordinating and organizing the integration of my son into the group lesson. I am thankful these services exist to help organize and implement the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.

Maintenance

The Department's mission is to provide enjoyable, accessible, safe, well-maintained and well-managed active and passive parks and recreation facilities that encourage healthy lifestyles; and to provide clean, safe and accessible leisure time activities to the citizens of Montgomery County. As a Department, we still do not have adequate staffing to reduce the maintenance service backlog. The lack of sufficient staffing has impacted all operating divisions' abilities to meet our established maintenance standards and frequencies for park maintenance and operations practices, including turf maintenance; athletic field maintenance; playground inspections; landscape maintenance; trails inspection and maintenance; tree inspections, removals and emergency requests; tree planting; court inspections and maintenance; trash removal; fleet maintenance; and trades and construction maintenance and repair services for park buildings and facilities. Playground and courts are maintained and inspected on a monthly basis. We lack appropriate funding for major renovations of courts and court fencing in a timely manner.

- Per performance measures, the average rate of completion of work orders between northern and southern parks is 77 percent (13,947 completed / 18,205 issued).
- Storm Water Structures Inspections/Maintenance: 54 percent are not in compliance with maintenance standards, January to June 2015.



- Hard Surface Trail Inspections: 18 percent are not in compliance with maintenance standards, January to June 2015.

Archaeology and History-Based Programming

Parks' archeology and history-based programming at Oakley Cabin, the Underground Railroad Experience Trail, Kingsley Schoolhouse in Little Bennett, Josiah Henson Park and Harper Cabin at Brookside Nature Center continue to draw crowds.

FY 15 highlights include:

- More than 3,330 citizens attended archaeology and history programs at Oakley Cabin, the Underground Railroad Experience Trail, Kingsley Schoolhouse in Little Bennett, Josiah Henson Park, and Harper Cabin at Brookside Nature Center between spring and fall 2015.
- The annual Family Archaeology Day at Needwood Mansion drew 100 people.
- Heritage Days in June 2015 saw a sold-out Underground Railroad Night Hike, despite a weekend of inclement weather.
- In six weeks of archaeology summer camps, Parks staff served 125 young people, introducing them to excavation and lab work. A two-week Archaeology Leader Training Workshop succeeded in training high school students in leadership skills.
- Cultural Resources staff initiated a new program for seniors that brings the history of Josiah Henson to assisted-living communities in the County.
- Along with the Montgomery Parks Foundation, Cultural Resources staff members developed a pilot educational program (via a Meyer Foundation grant) to reach out to Title I schools, enabling 45 children to learn about history and archaeology through a series of hands-on activities at Josiah Henson Park.
- Staff continues to partner with other cultural organizations to promote history, including participating in Rockville Science Day (5,000 attendees), Discovering Archaeology Day at Jefferson Patterson Park (250 attendees) and the Montgomery County History Conference (presenting a lecture on Josiah Henson Park). In addition, longtime archaeology volunteers continue to teach a Montgomery College lifelong learning course titled, *12,000 Years of Montgomery County History*.



Analysis Determines Oakley Cabin Constructed Prior to Civil War: Parks' Archaeologists recently completed a grant project at Oakley Cabin; it included the dating of the cabin based on intensive analysis of ceramics, glass and nails. Oakley Cabin is now known to have been constructed prior to the Civil War—a critical aspect of its public interpretation. Archaeologists at Josiah Henson Park continue to investigate possible outbuilding sites on the former Riley Plantation with the help of many volunteers.

The most exciting development for Parks' public history programs remains the construction of the Woodlawn Stone Barn Visitors' Center, set to be completed in fall 2015. This state-of-the-art visitors' center will tell stories of the Quakers, enslaved people, the Underground Railroad and free black communities in the County via multimedia films and traditional exhibits. However, the funding that is

required to staff and run this innovative, new asset for the public was not included in the FY 16 budget. If the facility is to open, an appropriation for staffing and operating costs must be approved by the County Council.

Montgomery Parks Foundation

Over the past two years, the Foundation has more than doubled overall fundraising. The Foundation ended FY 14 with \$1.8 million in donations and anticipates FY 15 to be just as successful. Thanks to the substantial increase in funding, the Foundation has more than doubled the list of programs it supports throughout the Department to more than 25 and that list continues to grow. The numbers of Foundation supporters increase by approximately 10

percent per year and have proven to be very loyal donors. Residents from all over the County help their parks and honor their loved ones by dedicating trees and benches in the parks. Foundation highlights include:

- **New Leadership:** On August 31, 2015, the Foundation welcomed Michael Nardolilli as its new Executive Director. Nardolilli is an experienced non-profit executive, having served as the leader of several successful non-profits, including the C&O Canal Trust and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
- **Josiah Henson Special Park:** The Foundation received a generous, multi-year, anonymous grant in the amount of \$75,000 to provide Title I schools through Montgomery County the opportunity to experience onsite learning opportunities at Josiah Henson Special Park. This grant also provided funds for materials for educators in these schools. Additionally, the Foundation spearheaded the collaborative effort which included testimony by Foundation staff and Montgomery Parks Department Cultural Resources staff in Annapolis on Bond Bill Saturday. As a result, a Bond Bill in the amount of \$100,000 was secured to further support the design, construction, repair and renovation of the park, including site improvements and landscaping. Over the past year, the Josiah Henson Special Park Capital Campaign dynamic Steering Committee, led by Catherine Leggett, put time and efforts into building and planning the opportunities for the community to get involved in this exciting project. They are well on their way to an energized fundraising and awareness campaign.
- **Brookside Gardens:** With the help of the Foundation, Brookside Gardens has been able to raise more than \$1.3 million in cash and pledges for the Garden Gateway Project.
- **Transportation Alternatives Program Grant:** An effort led in part by the Foundation secured a grant in the amount of \$2 million for the North Branch Trail.
- **Get to Know Gallery:** With a grant from Pepco Holdings Inc., the Foundation supported the Department in the development of a new pilot program and online Gallery through the "Get to Know" program. This program is a series of arts-based events designed to engage youth with



nature in their County parks and interpretive centers. The creative work they produce will be entered in the 2015 Montgomery County Get to Know Contest and Online Gallery.

- **Natural Surface Trails:** With \$30,000 in grant funds awarded from the State Highway Administration, Montgomery Parks Foundation helped bring skilled volunteers from the Student Conservation Association for five weeks this summer to do construction and renovation of the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail in Northwest Branch; the Scarlet Tanager, Hidden Pond and Fern Valley trails in Rachel Carson Conservation Park; and Seneca Creek Greenway Trail.
- **Olney Many Dog Park:** The Foundation also secured a Bond Bill in the amount of \$50,000 to install an underdrain system to combat the mud pits and standing water at Olney Manor Dog Park. This improvement will create a much cleaner, safer place for dogs to play.

Deer Management

Deer population management was increased in six park locations, accounting for approximately 1,000 new acres. Most notably, three of these locations were identified as Best Natural or Biodiversity Areas of parkland, and included expansion into the eastern County. This increase resulted in the approximate harvest of 150 deer from these new locations, and the total annual harvest of 1,131 deer from parkland. Additionally, an effort to estimate deer population densities across broad geographic areas of the county was begun, with data reports expected during the fall/winter.

For public safety, the Department of Parks closes select park locations to public access for the duration of deer population management operations. Outreach has begun to alert park users and residents of scheduled closures. Outreach includes signage posted in parks, web notices, social media outreach, as well as outreach to traditional media and community groups.

Archery Managed Deer Hunting Program Pilot Project

Following a thorough review of public input and management recommendations, the Proposed Archery Managed Deer Hunting Program Pilot Project has been approved for implementation. With this approval, Montgomery Parks will embark on this pilot project to assess the use of Archery Managed Deer Hunting as a means for reducing and maintaining deer populations on parkland. This project will begin in September 2015 and be completed by February 2016.

Organized and insured hunting groups will be selected and assigned, one to each park location, at Great Seneca Stream Valley Park Unit 1 (Germantown) and Watts Branch Stream Valley Park Units 1 and 2 (Potomac). Hunting will occur as per State and Montgomery Parks Archery Managed Deer Hunting Program regulations, from September to November 2015 and in January 2016.

Selected hunting groups/participants will undergo detailed safety and procedural training and will be required to fulfill stringent archery shooting qualifications. Hunting activities will be closely monitored. Safety, discretion and hunter ethics will remain a priority throughout, and Park staff and Park Police will be in close contact with the selected groups across the duration of the project. Parks will remain open to typical public use, as is common in other jurisdictions and Montgomery County.

Park Project Updates

Park Project Updates (including info on ROI for OBI Funding)

Legacy Open Space

The Legacy Open Space initiative identifies open space lands that should be acquired and interpreted because of exceptional natural or cultural value to current and future generations of Montgomery County residents. Legacy Open Space will acquire or obtain easements or make fee-simple purchases on open-space lands of countywide significance. The combination of non-County and County funds has resulted in the program successfully protecting more than 3,200 acres of open space in the County, including 3,031 acres of in-fee acquisition and 1,167 acres of easements.

Land Acquisitions from March-August 2015

Land	# of acres	Cost
Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park	0.3618	Donation
Dufief Local Park	0.0258	Donation
Ten Mile Creek Conservation Park	33.7460	Donation
Muddy Branch Stream Valley Unit #2	1.0800	Donation
Carrol Knolls Local Park	0.0631	Donation
Patuxent River Watershed Conservation Park	36.5200	\$900,000
Carrol Knolls Local Park	0.0110	\$2,500
North Branch Stream Valley Unit #4	<u>17.0100</u>	<u>\$725,000</u>
Total acquisitions:	88.8177	\$1,627,500

Brookside Gardens

The phased implementation in the Capital Improvements Program consists of Phase I: facility planning, design and construction of the Visitors Center entrance; Phase II: facility planning, design and construction of the expanded parking lot and storm water management; Phase III: stream stabilization along the perimeter of Brookside Gardens; Phase IV: improvements in Gude Gardens; and Phase V: design and construction of a new greenhouse and plant propagation facility to consolidate growing areas and provide operational efficiencies and budget savings.

- **Gardens Entrance and Parking (Phases I and –II):** This project improves the grand entrance and provides additional parking. It includes site grading and drainage, utilities, stormwater management, walls, permeable paving and boardwalks. Two donor-funded pieces of artwork are included in the project: Fern Gate, a pedestrian gate at the boardwalk, and Ginkgo Canopy at the orientation terrace. The entrance and parking are estimated to be completed in spring 2016.
- **Greenhouse (Phase V)** will feature state-of-the-art, energy-efficient building systems and rainwater harvesting technology.

Germantown Town Center Urban Park

Major on-site construction of Germantown Town Center Urban Park is virtually complete with some additional landscaping to be installed once the summer weather has passed. Features of this park

include boardwalks spanning wetland areas, a plaza connecting to the Germantown Library, significant artwork integrated throughout the site, a beacon terrace with artistic trellises overlooking the existing farm pond, winding retaining walls with eyelid plazas to provide ADA access and gathering space, necklaced lawn area for community gathering and events, and a canted lawn area with chaise lounge chairs and wavy concrete features. Increased operation funding will help cover the costs of opening and operating this new urban park. The grand opening is scheduled for October 17, 2015, and the patient community has already shown great interest in utilizing this great addition to the Park system.

Layhill Village Local Park Improvements

This project aims to provide an ADA-accessible hard surface trail to connect the parking lot at Layhill Village Local Park to the Matthew Henson Trail. Additionally, an unpermitted diamond field will be converted to a fully ADA-compliant rectangular field. The trail should be completed in fall 2015 and the athletic field in fall 2016.

Little Bennett Day Use Area: Phase 1

Phase 1 of the Day Use Area is complete and includes the installation of a new vehicular entrance, access drive, visitor parking, horse trailer parking, stone walls, terraces, a picnic area, a nature play area, eco-sound barriers, bio retention and meadow restoration. Future phases of the Day Use area include a multi-purpose outdoor classroom building, outdoor educational space and amphitheater, group picnic areas and shelter, a play complex, sledding hill, hay play, a group fire ring, teaching alcoves, two entrances and an access road, parking, bike path, hard and natural surface interpretive trails, bridges and boardwalks with overlooks, meadow enhancement and management, control of invasive species, managed forest succession and stream restoration.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park

The renovated football field in Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park opened in late fall 2014. Updates included replacing the existing natural grass field with synthetic turf, expanding the field size to accommodate multiple sports, replacing field lighting, bleachers and circulation pathways, improving accessible parking and access routes, enhanced landscaping with more than 100 trees and a storage shelter for maintenance equipment. The project was funded with ballfield initiative funding.

Northwest Branch Recreational Park

Phase 1 of the project was completed in the summer of 2015 by Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and expected to be accepted and opened by Parks in spring 2016. This phase includes three, adult-sized rectangular fields, one practice rectangle, a full size baseball field, parking for 240 cars and pedestrian pathways. FY 14 funding enabled the installation of a WSSC meter vault so that Parks could preserve the water and sewer infrastructure on the site for future irrigation and restroom building. FY 15 funding enabled the coordination of Parks staff with a SHA project manager to facilitate and inspect construction of the park. Future phases will be implemented over time and will include ballfield fencing, irrigation, bleachers, lighting, restrooms, pavilions, playground, additional parking and a pathway system.

North Four Corners Local Park

The existing, 7.9-acre North Four Corners Local Park was renovated to replace the field with an open landscaped space. This space features paths, seating areas and a playground. Landscaping and other minor improvements to existing facilities were also provided in this area. Park features include a rectangular sports field, parking area with vehicular access from University Boulevard to Southwood Avenue, paved loop walkways, a plaza with seating areas and amenities, landscape and stormwater management facilities. The park is open to the public, except for a rectangular field, which will open in spring 2016.

Woodlawn Stone Barn Visitor's Center

The Woodlawn Stone Barn Visitor Center is nearing completion. The building and site rehabilitation is 95 percent in place and the exhibits fabrication and production is 75 percent finished. FY 14 funding helped the Department through two projects: rehabilitation of buildings and site work; and exhibits and multimedia fabrication, production and installation. With FY 15 funding, the Department hired contractors and initiated those two projects.

The entire project will be substantially completed in October 2015. If supplemental operational funding is provided by County Council in FY16, the Cultural Resources Stewardship Section will be able to open and begin operating the facility in spring 2016. If not, the facility will not be opened until after July 2016.

Fall 2015 Semi-Annual Report: Schedule for Major CIP Projects

PDF	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	BSY
Battery Lane Urban Park (P118701)								
Brookside Gardens Master Plan Implementation (P078702)								
Elm Street Urban Park (P138701)								
Josiah Henson Historic Park (P871552)								
Kemp Mill Urban Park (P138702)								
Laytonia Recreational Park (P038703)								
Little Bennett Regional Park Day Use Area (P138703)								
Magruder Branch Trail Extension (P098706)								
North Branch Trail (P871541)								
Seneca Crossing Local Park (P138704)								
Warner Circle Special Park (P118703)								
Western Grove Urban Park (P871548)								
Woodlawn Barn Visitor Center								
Woodside Urban Park (P138705)								

 Design
  Construction
  Procurement

Major Projects Completed in FY15

- Brookside Gardens Visitor Center Entrance Improvements
- Little Bennett Regional Park Interim Day Use Area
- Olney Manor Dog Park
- Facility Plans for Wheaton-Claridge, Hillandale, Caroline Freeland, Rock Creek Trail Renovations, and Trail Intersection Safety Improvements
- Planned Infrastructure Maintenance to Playgrounds, Tennis Courts, Ballfields, and Trials Countywide.
- Stewardship Projects to Protect Natural and Cultural Resources Countywide.
- ADA Improvements at Parks Countywide
- North Four Corners Local Park

FY15 IMPLEMENTATION RATE

PDF #	PDF Name	Approved FY15 Expenditures	Expenditures	Expenditure Rate
128701	ADA Compliance: Local Parks	500,000	\$ 578,045	116%
128702	ADA Compliance: Non-Local Parks	700,000	\$ 699,176	100%
008720	Ballfield Improvements	720,000	\$ 762,411	106%
078702	Brookside Gardens Master Plan Implementation	2,149,000	\$ 2,565,453	119%
977748	Cost Sharing: Local Parks	75,000	\$ 141,887	189%
761682	Cost Sharing: Non-Local Parks	50,000	\$ 94,036	188%
957775	Facility Planning: Local Parks	300,000	\$ 551,326	184%
958776	Facility Planning: Non-Local Parks	300,000	\$ 466,445	155%
098705	Falls Road Local Park	500,000	\$ 860,634	172%
078704	Germantown Town Center Urban Park	1,081,000	\$ 1,647,631	152%
078705	Greenbriar Local Park	2,301,000	\$ 1,880,460	82%
138702	Kemp Mill Urban Park	2,163,000	\$ 43,666	2%
038703	Laytonia Recreational Park	1,000,000	\$ 1,137,974	114%
998799	Minor New Construction - Local Parks	225,000	\$ 146,431	65%
998763	Minor New Construction - Non-Local Parks	150,000	\$ 154,938	103%
078706	North Four Corners Local Park	1,170,000	\$ 1,392,064	119%
118704	Northwest Branch Recreational Park	75,000	\$ 1,547	2%
967754	Planned Lifecycle Asset Replacement Local Parks	2,295,000	1,507,806	66%
968755	Planned Lifecycle Asset Replacement Non-Local Parks	1,800,000	1,201,367	67%
078701	Pollution Prevention	625,000	\$ 406,672	65%
118702	Rock Creek Maintenance Facility	614,000	\$ 1,393,712	227%
098709	Shady Grove Maintenance Facility	50,000	\$ 16,955	34%
058755	Small Grant/Donor-Assisted CIP	300,000	\$ 112,547	38%
818571	Stream Protection: SVP	533,000	\$ 791,545	149%
768673	Trails: Hard Surface Design & Construction	300,000	\$ 168,241	56%
888754	Trails: Hard Surface Renovation	800,000	\$ 182,825	23%
871540	Urban Park Elements	100,000	\$ -	0%
871548	Western Grove Urban Park	255,000	\$ 41,608	16%
098703	Woodlawn Barn Visitors Center	1,800,000	\$ 1,435,576	80%
138705	Woodside Urban Park	300,000	\$ 197,998	66%
Development Subtotal - PDD		23,231,000.00	20,580,976.49	89%
838882	Roof Replacement: Non-Local Pk	263,000	\$ 1,028,200	391%
118703	Warner Circle Special Park	300,000	\$ 182,238	61%
998710	Energy Conservation - Local Parks	37,000	\$ 35,138	95%
998711	Energy Conservation - Non-Local Parks	40,000	\$ 19,333	48%
808494	Restoration of Historic Structures	782,000	\$ 608,486	78%
858710	Trails: Natural Surface	250,000	\$ 62,539	25%
998773	Enterprise Facilities' Improvements	800,000	\$ 366,261	46%
Development Subtotal - Other Divisions		2,472,000	2,302,194	93.1%
767828	Acquisition: Local Parks	1,035,000	\$ 410,043	40%
998798	Acquisition: Non-Local Parks	1,135,000	\$ 1,840,603	162%
018710	Legacy Open Space	3,250,000	\$ 4,721,704	145%
Acquisition Total		5,420,000	6,972,350	129%
Grand Total - All Dev + Acq		31,123,000	29,855,520	95.9%

Semi-Annual Report

Fall 2015



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