

# Semi-Annual Report

Spring 2015



Montgomery County Department of Parks | Montgomery County Planning Department  
MontgomeryParks.org | MontgomeryPlanning.org  
M-NCPPC Montgomery County



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Department of Parks

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## Letter from the Chair

President Leventhal and Members of the Council:

I am pleased to present the latest achievements of the Planning Board, Planning Department and Department of Parks in our Spring 2015 Semi-Annual Report. We have been working to connect land use policies and regulations to the County's goals for economic development, housing and transportation, while improving public engagement in the planning process. The Department of Parks will play an increasingly important role in our planning activities in the future, particularly in relation to establishing and activating urban parks.

Among the highlights of the Planning Department's recent work is the new County Zoning Ordinance, which took effect on October 30, 2014. The new code not only makes it easier to build mixed-use communities, but also streamlines development review to make it less costly and time-consuming. This comprehensive rewrite of our zoning law culminates years of collaborative effort among the Planning Department and Board, County Council, real estate industry and civic community.

With the Zoning Ordinance now enacted, the Planning Department has turned its attention to a top-to-bottom revision of the provisions of the Montgomery County Code governing the subdivision of land. This project will produce the most comprehensive reform of the subdivision regulations in 50 years and, like the new zoning code, will modernize and streamline the development review process.

These new regulations will help to address the economic challenges facing our County's residents, including the need for more affordable housing, by making strategically located development easier to build. The Planning Department is also looking at ways to increase the supply of moderately-priced

housing units through a study of rental housing patterns. We expect this study will generate fresh recommendations for consideration by the Council.

Multi-modal transportation – roads, Metrorail, buses, bicycles, foot traffic – continues to be the focus of ongoing planning, advocacy and regulatory efforts. The Purple Line, in particular, has received renewed attention in recent months since the election of Maryland Governor Larry Hogan. In December 2014, Prince George's Planning Board Chair Elizabeth Hewlett and I wrote a letter to the Governor-Elect and his team to outline the economic benefits of keeping the 16-mile light rail project on track.

The Planning Department's ongoing transportation initiatives include the revision and consolidation of the County's Master Plan of Highways, the first comprehensive update to that plan since 1955. Transit lines, rail stations and other transportation centers are being added to the road network plan, which is being renamed the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. In addition, we have begun work on revisions to the Subdivision Staging Policy's transportation tests in an effort to align transportation planning and exactions more closely with the County's land use and economic development priorities.

Over the past few months, collaboration with our civic leaders has increased to gain community feedback and rethink past practices and patterns of development. Last fall, the Planning Department worked with County Councilmember Hans Riemer to stage placemaking workshops and solicit ideas from the community about key civic sites in Downtown Silver Spring. Similarly, we collaborated with Councilmember Roger Berliner on a public forum on school and transportation issues that was held in March to provide the opportunity for citizens to contribute ideas about the future of County infrastructure.

Public outreach has played an increasingly important role in the County's planning efforts. In November 2014, the Planning Department launched a weeklong series of community workshops to brainstorm concepts for the Westbard Sector Plan. Similar events were held in January and February to engage the community in the Montgomery Village Master Plan. Village residents were invited to learn about specific subject areas, such as urban design, land use, parks, environment and transportation, at the sessions.

Happy hours sponsored by local businesses engaged millennials and other residents who do not typically attend planning meetings to become involved in the Downtown Bethesda Plan. I have personally attended at least one public meeting in connection with every master plan under review and reached out to Spanish language media and other audiences that in the past have not received a proportionate share of attention in our planning activities.

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.

The Department of Parks is designing and renovating urban parks in Downtown Bethesda, Germantown and Silver Spring (where the County's first urban dog park is being built) to encourage more citizen



activity. Studies are underway to determine what amenities and programming are needed to make these parks more accessible, useful and attractive.

Athletic fields are another major priority for the Department of Parks. Staff is examining ways to improve and maintain the nearly 300 athletic fields in the County more efficiently and add capacity where needed. A detailed analysis of the inventory is underway to assess current demand for these outdoor facilities, including baseball diamonds and cricket fields, and predict the needs of future generations.

Both paved and natural surface trails consistently rank at the top of the Department's surveys asking users for input on facility needs. Trails are an important part of providing our residents with safe and attractive opportunities to walk or bike instead of driving, and they are highly valued recreational assets. Improved data collection and user feedback has led Montgomery Parks to develop a comprehensive Countywide Parks Trails Plan Amendment that will be presented for review and approval to the Planning Board this spring. The plan's proposed "loops and links" framework aims to provide a trail experience within three miles of every County resident by the year 2030. In addition, a network of trails, parks and open spaces is being recommended for every urban master or sector plan.

We are well aware of the difficult budget environment that continues to limit the resources available to every part of local government. I am focused on making sure that the Planning and Parks Departments are helping to establish economically, socially and environmentally sustainable practices, and assisting the efforts to attract residents and businesses to the County. I look forward to working with the Council and Executive to ensure our progress continues in meeting our shared goals.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Casey Anderson', with a stylized, cursive script.

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

# Department of Parks

## INTRODUCTION

What comes to mind when you think of a park? A playground filled with curiosity and laughter? Beautiful landscapes filled with green grass, lush trees and wildlife? Athletic fields filled with the sounds of baseball, soccer or lacrosse?

The truth is that parks mean different things to different people. But there's one thing we can agree on: Whether a place for quiet reflection, athleticism, celebration or connecting with nature, **safe, accessible parks are vital to the individuals and communities that make up Montgomery County.**

The important role played by parks in the communities we serve and the lives we touch underscores the need for our organization to constantly improve, innovate and ensure that our valuable natural and cultural resources will be enjoyed and appreciated by generations to come. The following report provides an overview of what we have identified as top priorities for improvement, innovation and support for the year ahead.

## PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES



## Urban Parks

**URBAN PARKS INITIATIVE:** *Offering active, vibrant urban parks providing essential open space and meeting the needs of diverse users are priorities for Montgomery Parks.*

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- In areas where urban parks have been used as a redevelopment tool, surrounding building vacancy rates have dramatically dropped by as much as 40 percent. (Source: City Parks Alliance)
- Exposing young people to the joys of outdoor activities in open spaces such as parks helps lower stress, improves physical and emotional health, reduces hyperactivity and builds stronger immune systems. (Source: City Parks Alliance)

- Nearly 80 percent of the American population live in urban areas. A network of parks and open spaces that includes protected natural lands, ecological reserves, wetlands and other green areas is critical to providing healthy habitats for humans, wildlife and plants in these densely built places. *(Source: City Parks Alliance)*
- Dog parks are some of our most frequently requested facilities. The 2012 Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan estimates that by the year 2022, our County will need 24 additional acres of dog parks. Montgomery County currently has 0.5 off-leash dog parks per 100,000 people, a supply which is considerably lower than many American cities.

**Parks and open spaces are important components of healthy urban areas.** As our transit-oriented urban cores accommodate more density and residents, the need for nearby parks, open space and recreational facilities will only grow. Urban living can reduce people's exposure to and engagement with nature, leading to negative health effects. Fortunately, parks and open spaces provide a vital link to nature that people need to be healthy. Parks provide spaces for leisure, sport and restoration, all of which improve health. What's more, the natural green characteristics of parks can reduce stress. Parks also help create community cohesion and identity by providing spaces for gatherings and events, with opportunities for people to meet each other, socialize and bond with neighbors. The ongoing work on urban parks aims to give urban communities in Montgomery County the parks they need.

**One of Montgomery Parks' top priorities is to ensure that we have the right parks and open spaces in the right places for current and future generations to enjoy.** The Vision 2030 Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation and the 2012 Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan identified that the greatest need for additional parks, recreation and open space existed in the urban areas of Montgomery County. Although these areas are already densely populated and developed, Montgomery Parks recognizes the importance of providing transit- and pedestrian-accessible parks, trails and open space where people live, work and play.

#### **NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:**

Although the competition for land in growth areas makes it difficult to acquire new parks and open spaces, Montgomery Parks and the Montgomery County Planning Board have recognized ways to begin improving the quality and quantity of urban parks within the County. Steps taken thus far include:

- **Recommending a network of parks, trails and open spaces** to meet needs identified by careful analyses in every urban Master Plan or Sector Plan.
- **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.
- **Studying lessons learned from the region and the country** so we can determine what combination of public and private efforts work best to own and operate different types of urban parks.



- **Developing a Site Selection Study** to identify locations for the most needed urban park amenities.
- **Designing Montgomery Parks' first urban dog park** at Ellsworth Urban Park in Silver Spring.
- **Planning the renovation of several parks that already exist in urban areas**, including Woodside Urban Park in Silver Spring, Caroline-Freeland Urban Park in Bethesda and Norwood Local Park in Bethesda.
- **Designing and constructing Germantown Town Center Urban Park**, which is slated to open this summer.
- **Working on an update to the Recreational Guidelines** to align recreation facilities with documented needs.

**In spring 2015, Montgomery Parks will launch a program to activate several of our urban parks.**

Three sites have been selected as pilots – Woodside Urban Park in Silver Spring, Wall Park in White Flint and Germantown Town Center in Germantown – for new and exciting features and events. The Department will also continue its research on the acquisition, ownership, operations and programming of urban parks to better inform our efforts to offer and improve urban parks for Montgomery County residents.

**Upcoming Needs:** Currently, Montgomery Parks has multiple staff in various divisions who perform different aspects of urban park planning and operations. In order to more effectively plan for and deliver urban parks to our community, the Department has identified the need to add a specialized career position to oversee and coordinate the planning, development, management, programming and policing



## Athletic Fields

**ATHLETIC FIELDS INITIATIVE:** *Effectively managing, regularly analyzing and constantly improving how we plan and manage athletic fields will help ensure we offer the right types of fields in the right locations for current and future user groups.*

## FASCINATING FACTS:

- Montgomery Parks manages 290 athletic fields. Of those fields, 181 are diamonds and 109 are rectangles.
- Parks maintains 176 athletic fields at Montgomery County public elementary and middle school sites.
- There are three cricket fields and three outdoor artificial turf rectangular fields in Montgomery Parks' system.
- In the past, children tended to play up to three sports per year. Today's children are picking a sport, specializing in it at younger ages and playing it year-round.
- Travel teams, which are popular with teenage field users aged 15 and older, seek high-quality competition fields.

**Another priority for Montgomery Parks is improving how we plan, manage and maintain athletic fields.** With 290 athletic fields spread throughout the County and hundreds of athletic field user groups, the Athletic Field Program is one of the largest, most complex programs managed by Montgomery Parks.

In recognition of the important role that athletic fields play in the lives of County residents and park users, the Department has prioritized examining and addressing issues that currently exist with athletic fields and more effectively planning for the needs of future generations. Some of the actions we are currently taking include:

- Reviewing the **inventory, maintenance and improvement needs** of all park and MCPS elementary and middle school fields in order to determine maintenance and improvement priorities.
- Conducting a **detailed analysis of field use** in order to better assess the demand for athletic fields and to allow us to maximize field time for users.
- **Reaching out to athletic field user groups and governmental partners** to learn about sports trends in their organizations.
- Researching and improving the methods used by the Department to **predict future athletic field needs**.
- Converting **underutilized softball fields into cricket fields** based on the increasing demand for cricket fields identified in the 2012 PROS Plan.
- Conducting a **site selection study** for new cricket fields in the upper regions of the County.

In addition, the Department plans to conduct a statistically valid survey of County residents to find out what sports they play and how often they play them to better inform our needs assessments.

## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:

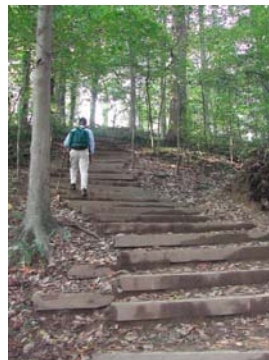
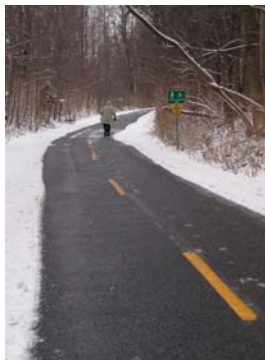
Over the past six months, Montgomery Parks has taken several steps to improve field maintenance and to provide users with better field options. Achievements include:

- **Experimenting with Bermuda grass** at rectangular fields to better withstand heavy use and to keep grass cover.
- **Completing a highly successful field renovation at South Germantown** in just 1.5 months using Bermuda grass and other innovative practices.
- Studying **potential alternatives to crumb rubber infill** for artificial turf fields.
- Opening Montgomery Parks' **third artificial turf field at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park.**
- **Continued partnerships with organizations**, including Montgomery Soccer Foundation and others to provide needed fields, courts and maintenance that the Department cannot currently support.

**Upcoming Needs:** Montgomery Parks is currently revisiting its criteria for assuming the maintenance of Montgomery County Public School elementary and middle school fields. If it is determined that Montgomery Parks should take on the maintenance of additional school fields, the Department will request additional resources in order to maintain these fields.

## Trails

**TRAILS INITIATIVE:** *Designing and building sustainable trails that create connectivity and are enjoyed by a variety of users are priorities for Montgomery Parks.*



## FASCINATING FACTS:

- Montgomery Parks manages 128 miles of natural surface trails and 63 miles of hard surface trails throughout Montgomery County.
- Montgomery County residents believe that trails are important! According to the Vision 2030 survey:

- 73 percent of residents consider hard surface park trails to be important to their households, and 70 percent of residents believe it is important to improve, expand or add new hard surface trails.
- 72 percent of residents consider natural surface park trails important to their households, and 68 percent of residents believe it is important to improve, expand or add new natural surface trails.
- Both the Rock Creek Trail and Sligo Creek Trail are National Recreation Trails and therefore are part of the National Trails System which also includes National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails.
- Montgomery Parks has three heart-smart trails designed to allow users to track how far they've walked.

**Park trails provide Montgomery County residents with important opportunities for nature-based recreation and outdoor fitness.** Trails near central business districts or employment centers also serve as important non-motorized transportation routes. For these reasons, trails are among the most popular facilities in the County's park system and are a focus area for Montgomery Parks.

**Trails play an increasingly important role in the lives of county residents.** It is critical that we strike the right balance between building and enhancing park trails, while also protecting the resources through which those trails pass. Fortunately, improved mapping technology and resource analysis methods supply crucial data for designing and building lower-cost trails that residents and visitors can enjoy while minimizing their impact on natural resources and wildlife habitats.

In light of improved data and user feedback, **Montgomery Parks has developed a comprehensive Countywide Park Trails Plan Amendment** that will be presented for review and approval to the Montgomery County Planning Board this spring. The amendment will propose a "loops and links" framework that aims to provide a countywide trail experience within three miles of every county resident by the year 2030. The new framework represents a network of park trails – as well as key regional bikeway connectors – that Montgomery Parks can realistically and sustainably build, operate and maintain in the most cost-effective way possible. Additionally, the plan will propose a trail system that is designed to accommodate as many potential users as possible. This system is focused on maximizing recreational opportunities for park users while also accommodating transportation demand where appropriate.

**While working to finalize the Countywide Park Trails Plan Amendment, the Department is also:**

- **Using automated trail user counting equipment** to tabulate trail use along the Capital Crescent Trail.
- **Piloting a well-received snow-removal program along the Capital Crescent Trail** that allows trail users, specifically bicycle commuters, to use this popular trail following snow events.
- Investing in **natural surface trail improvements**, as well **preventive tree care inspections and maintenance** along hard surface park trails.

- Implementing the **Capital Improvement Program** for both natural and hard surface park trails.

**Notable achievements:** Over the past six months, several improvements have been made to natural surface and paved trails throughout our park system, including:

- The installation of **two bridges along the Muddy Branch Trail** between Quince Orchard Road and Turkey Foot Road.
- The **completion of several trail connectors**, including the Upper Rock Creek Trail from the Agricultural History Farm Park to Muncaster Road and Carson Farm Trail from the Upper Rock Creek Trail to Carson Farm Bike Park.
- The completion of phase two of the **Carson Farm Bike Park** and **South Germantown Jump Track**.
- In addition, significant progress has been made on a number of **Capital Improvement Program projects**, including a signage plan and improvements along the Rock Creek Trail and facility improvements in Rock Creek Stream Valley Park Units 1-3.

**Upcoming Needs:** Montgomery Parks anticipates the need to provide additional support for natural surface trail construction and maintenance; improve the sustainability of older stream valley hard surface park trails; inventory and evaluate all unsanctioned trails on county parkland; and add automated counters at additional hard surface trails. Additional funding will be needed to support these efforts.





## Park and Facility Maintenance

**PARK AND FACILITY MAINTENANCE INITIATIVE:** *Properly maintaining parks, facilities, trails, playgrounds and other amenities is critical to providing clean, safe and accessible parks to our residents and park users.*

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- Northern and Southern Parks Division operations staff completed 11,495 routine work requests (80 percent of submitted) and 5,916 non-routine work requests (89 percent of submitted) in FY14.
- Facilities Management Division responded to 68 percent of emergency maintenance requests within two hours (arrival on-site) of emergency services calls in FY14.
- Horticulture, Forestry and Environmental Education Division's Arboriculture staff removed 1,062 trees in FY14. Trees are typically removed when they are dead, diseased or posing a hazardous condition to park property, adjacent property and park users. Staff in the Department jointly planted 1,061 trees in fiscal year 2014 grown at the Pope Farm Nursery and thereby increased the tree canopy throughout the County.
- Park arborists have performed a tree risk assessment and identified hazardous trees, limbs and other work that needs to be completed by the tree crews at 25 percent of our parks. Our goal is to perform such assessments at 100 percent of our parks.
- Over the 12 months of fiscal year 2014, the Arboriculture Section's tree crew completed 57 percent of the work requests received for tree maintenance. Of 2,029 requests received and tracked in SmartParks, 1,167 were completed and 829 remained open going into fiscal year 2015.
- There are currently 493 backlogged tree requests for the tree crew; these requests reflect work that either needs to be inspected and prioritized by a park arborist or work that has already been inspected and is in the queue for the tree crew to complete.

**In order to ensure our parks and facilities remain clean, safe and accessible for residents and park users, it is imperative that we invest in the inspection and maintenance of our parks, facilities, trails, playgrounds, athletic fields and courts, trees, vehicles and equipment.**

Tasked with the responsibility for more than 36,000 acres of land, 417 parks, 290 athletic fields, 279 playgrounds and hundreds of other facilities and vehicles, the Parks Department requires dedicated resources for the routine and non-routine inspection and maintenance of our properties.

Unfortunately, Montgomery Parks continues to face an extensive maintenance service backlog that cannot be alleviated at current funding or staffing levels. This backlog impacts both routine work requests, which include mowing, athletic field maintenance, playground inspections and equipment maintenance. The backlog also affects non-routine work requests, which include work requests submitted by park visitors, response to weather-related issues and emergencies, removal of illegal dumping and graffiti, special event support and repairs that are not otherwise preventable.

Although we have attempted to chip away at this backlog through existing career and seasonal staffing support, additional resources will be needed to achieve park maintenance standards, address back-logged requests and meet the expectations of our citizens and park users.

**Trail maintenance, mowing frequencies, routine maintenance at basketball and tennis courts, and athletic field maintenance activities, including aerating, fertilization and over seeding, are some examples of projects that often are backlogged due to staffing shortages.**

**Upcoming Needs:** In an effort to reduce our maintenance service backlog and more effectively maintain our various parks, facilities and properties, Montgomery Parks plans to request additional maintenance resources to support for the upcoming fiscal year.

Additionally, Montgomery Parks plans to request additional staff and contract funding to address hazardous trees in parks and along paved hiker-biker trails and parkways.



## Sustainability Initiatives

**SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE:** *Montgomery Parks is committed to improving and increasing sustainability efforts across the organization.*

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- Recycling a single aluminum can saves enough energy to power a television for three hours.
- A hot water faucet that leaks one drop per second can add up to 165 gallons a month. That's more water than one person uses in two weeks.
- Running tap water for two minutes is equal to 3-5 gallons of water.

**In recognition of the new Sustainability Practices and Procedures adopted by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 2012, Montgomery Parks developed a Department-wide Sustainability Plan that will be implemented across the organization.**

This plan calls for Montgomery Parks to adopt green building management strategies; procure high-efficiency, sustainable goods and services; implement green development strategies in community planning, landscape design and other site planning; foster ongoing awareness among employees and park users regarding sustainability objectives and programs; and adhere to updated County and State sustainability mandates.

Some examples of sustainability initiatives that have helped Department staff conserve energy; save time, money and resources; and become better environmental stewards include:

- Installation of **Wi-Fi-enabled programmable thermostats** that allow us to check and reset room temperatures via smartphones and computers; these thermostats also allow us to detect issues with HVAC systems in real time and track usage across multiple facilities.
- **Installation of LED lights** in park offices and facilities that use less energy and require less frequent maintenance and bulb replacement.
- Installation of a **solar hot water system** to heat water for bathrooms and showers at Shady Grove Maintenance Yard. This pilot program has resulted in energy savings and will be expanded to include maintenance yard car wash units in the near future.
- Completing a **feasibility study and site selections for solar farms**. Once operational, we anticipate that solar farms will significantly reduce our electrical energy costs and reduce our overall carbon footprint.

**Upcoming Needs:** While every Montgomery Parks employee is tasked with supporting sustainability initiatives, the addition of a sustainability coordinator would enable the Department to better manage and implement all sustainability initiatives for Montgomery Parks, leading to increased efficiencies, cost savings and implementation of green development planning and management practices.



## Archeology and History-Based Programming

**ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORY INITIATIVE:** *Preserving, restoring and interpreting historic and archaeological sites and resources on parkland are critical parts of the Department's mission.*

**FASCINATING FACTS:**

- Montgomery Parks is responsible for approximately 400 archaeological sites on parkland and 172 distinct archaeological collections.
- Each collection can contain as many as 40,000 individual artifacts.
- Excavations at Josiah Henson Park have yielded 18,000 artifacts.
- Montgomery Parks offers a mix of programming and events at six historic sites, including Josiah Henson Park, Oakley Cabin, the Underground Railroad Experience Trail, Kingsley Schoolhouse, the Agricultural History Farm Park and Blockhouse Point.
- Woodlawn Barn Visitors Center will open in fiscal year 2016, telling the story of the Quakers, enslaved and free black communities, and the Underground Railroad through artifacts, multimedia and exhibits. Parks will operate a ticketed program at the center for school children, families and tourists with appropriate fees.

**With 117 standing historic structures on 43 historic sites and 400 archeological sites, Montgomery Parks has an extensive inventory of historical sites and responsibilities.**

**One critical responsibility involves rigorous archaeological supervision in compliance with state and federal laws.** Projects at Josiah Henson Park, Woodlawn Barn Visitors Center, Mid-County Highway (M-83), Poole's Store Restoration, Brainard Warner Park, Brookville Bypass, cell tower sites, wetland mitigation sites, WSSC Consent Decree sites and Purple Line station sites all require a specialized staff resource to comply with legal requirements. Additional resources are needed to ensure compliance with State and Federal laws at these sites. In particular, these specialized staff resources are required in order to proceed at the Josiah Henson archeological excavation site, which holds national (if not international) significance.

**Interpreting historic sites to the public through programming and events is another critical responsibility for Montgomery Parks.** Several historic sites are hosts to both free public tours scheduled from April through October and revenue-generating group tours that occur throughout the year. Host sites include the Underground Railroad Experience Trail and Oakley Cabin African American Museum and Park. Other sites host only intermittent tours and events due to insufficient staffing, including the Agricultural History Farm Park, Blockhouse Point and Josiah Henson Park.

Despite challenges from limited resources and staffing, Montgomery Parks is making strides in establishing a thriving group tours program, developing relationships with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), private and home schools and developing partnerships with Button Farm, Sandy Spring

Friends School, Sandy Spring Museum, Sandy Spring Slave Museum and Heritage Montgomery. With just one career staff person dedicated to overseeing educational programming and events at all our historic sites, current offerings depend on the work of volunteers and low-paid docents to deliver tours, programs and events. In order to ensure our important historic sites are interpreted and open to the public regularly, more museum-trained professional staff will be needed.

**Upcoming Needs:** Preserving, analyzing, restoring and interpreting historic and archaeological sites on parkland are essential components of the Department's mission. The Department plans to request additional staffing support for archeological projects and their interpretation (including the Josiah Henson dig) and history-based programming at underrepresented historic sites, including the Agricultural History Farm Park.



## Corporate Sponsorship Program/Montgomery Parks Foundation

**THE MONTGOMERY PARKS FOUNDATION:** This nonprofit organization continues to expand opportunities for Montgomery County residents, businesses and organizations to support their parks through donations, grants, sponsorships and memberships.

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- The Montgomery Parks Foundation supports a variety of projects, including trail maintenance and projects at nature centers and dog parks.
- In FY14, the Montgomery Parks Foundation planned to raise a total of \$1.1 million. Total revenues actually exceeded \$1.8 million.
- The Foundation received a \$1 million gift to support the Brookside Gardens Greenhouse project and more than \$300,000 in cash and pledges to support entrance and parking lot access renovations at Brookside Gardens.



- In FY14, the Foundation raised more than \$44,000 in unrestricted donations and pledges. This amount was double what the organization expected to raise.

**The Montgomery Parks Foundation continues to expand opportunities for Montgomery County residents, businesses and organizations to support their parks through donations, grants, sponsorships and memberships.** The Montgomery Parks Foundation is currently supporting several large fundraising efforts, including a capital campaign to support development and interpretive exhibits at Josiah Henson Park, fundraising to support renovations and development at Brookside Gardens as part of the Gardens Master Plan project and a new Corporate Sponsorship Program aimed at recognizing the business community's financial support for parks and facilities.

**Upcoming Needs:** As the Montgomery Parks Foundation increases its programs and activities, additional administrative support is needed to ensure that donations and sponsorships are tracked and properly accounted for, donors are properly recognized and the installation of personalized tribute benches, trees, bricks and boulders is coordinated quickly and efficiently.

In addition, a position to manage the Foundation's Corporate Sponsorship Program will enable the Foundation to implement the approved Corporate Sponsorship Policy and identify and secure significant funds that will support both the Foundation and Montgomery Parks. We expect that this position will eventually be supported with funding raised through the Corporate Sponsorship Program.



## Community Gardens

**COMMUNITY GARDENS INITIATIVE:** *As the demand for community gardens within Montgomery County continues to increase, Montgomery Parks looks to find ways to expand this important program.*

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- Montgomery Parks manages 11 community gardens.
- More than 500 families in Montgomery County use and benefit from community gardens.

**Since the Community Gardens program opened its first garden in Takoma Park in the spring of 2009, this popular program has grown to offer 11 community gardens that serve more than 500 families throughout Montgomery County.** Each year, the demand for garden plots exceeds existing capacity to provide gardening space, and in recent years, there has been a waiting list for spaces.

In fiscal year 2014, the Community Gardens Program was evaluated for expansion possibilities and developing ADA-accessible gardening opportunities. As a result, the Department plans to open the new Brink Road Community Garden at the NeoRestorative Center located in Germantown. This new site will add approximately 10 new gardening plots and space for ADA-accessible gardening to our current inventory. In addition, the existing South Germantown, Sligo Mill Overlook, Parklawn and Rocking Horse community gardens have been identified as possible locations for additional plots and accessible gardening opportunities, and the upcoming renovation of Woodside Urban Park includes a proposal for community gardens with accessible plots.

**Upcoming needs:** Montgomery Parks' community gardens program is currently managed by a part-time seasonal staff position and 18 dedicated volunteer garden coordinators. While there is great demand to expand this program, the Department must add staff and resources to implement any expansion efforts.



## Security Software Databases for Park Police

**TECHNOLOGY AND SOFTWARE INITIATIVE:** *Ensuring that our technology and software systems are well supported and monitored is critical to supporting law enforcement efforts in protecting park users, staff and facilities.*

### **FASCINATING FACTS:**

- More than 4 million license plates were read through Park Police Technology Systems in FY14.
- The Park Police Division has 58 in-car mobile video systems, which have resulted in more than 22,000 video files or 4.54 terra-bytes of data to manage. This number will only expand in FY15.
- More than 22,000 E-Tickets transactions occurred in FY14, including 12,838 warnings, 7,392 traffic citations and 2,512 equipment repair orders.
- Incident Reports, Crime Reports, Arrest Reports, Supplement Reports, Vehicle Impound Reports, Field Interview Reports, Civil Warnings and Criminal Warnings are now being processed entirely electronically.

**Ensuring that current systems support law enforcement efforts and monitor and protect our park users, staff and facilities is a priority for Montgomery Parks.** The department has hired a term-contract police systems administrator for the Park Police Division. This law enforcement technology expert is tasked with overseeing the administration, integration and maintenance of numerous systems that are applied to law enforcement, enterprise security and life safety. A snapshot of some of the systems overseen include police mapping/auto vehicle locator systems, state/CJIS/NCIC interfaces, electronic ticketing systems, automated crash reporting systems, in-car and body-worn law enforcement video systems, intrusion detection, fire alarms, emergency call stations, security operations and more.

**Surveillance cameras and systems are also effective tools in deterring criminal activity and monitoring unattended facilities.** As our Department has grown and technology has changed, the need for surveillance systems has outpaced the Department's ability to install, maintain and monitor these systems. Moving forward, the Department needs to extend surveillance video coverage to as much M-NCPPC property as possible, integrate smart sensors (e.g., motion detectors, vehicle loop detectors, virtual trip-wires) throughout M-NCPPC properties, overhaul central station/alarm monitoring systems and set up an Enterprise Security Operations Center to monitor video and sensors in real time.

**Upcoming Needs:** Technology and software systems will need dedicated, long-term staff support. As such, the Department plans to request converting the current term-contract police systems administrator to a career position. Additionally, the department plans to request the addition of one term-contract police systems technician to help monitor and respond to investigative requests, Freedom of Information Act Requests, retention management and other needs. In recognition of the need for increased security measures, we also plan to request additional resources to expand our current surveillance camera program. In future years, we believe additional resources will be needed to further expand and support our surveillance systems.



## Deer Management

**DEER MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE:** *Montgomery Parks' deer management program aims to reduce and maintain deer populations in accordance with the goals of Montgomery County's deer management plan.*

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- As of 2015, a total of 43 parks are included in the program, covering more than 17,900 acres.
- Since the program's inception in 1995, Montgomery Parks has harvested more than 13,000 deer and donated more than 87 tons of deer meat, or 695,000 servings, to local charities.
- In FY14, 67 volunteers assisted with the Deer Management Program and contributed 670 total hours.
- In FY15, additional funding allocated to the Deer Management Program enabled management operations to expand into more than 1,500 additional acres of parkland. These expansions added management operations at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park, Paint Branch Stream Valley Parks and Red Door Store Historic Park. Operations were also expanded in Black Hill Regional Park and Hoyles Mill Conservation Park.

**Montgomery Parks' deer management operation is the largest component of a countywide deer management program developed and implemented in coordination with other agencies through the Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group.** The program aims to reduce and maintain deer populations in accordance with the goals of the county's deer management plan.

Recommendations from the Deer Management Work Group, requests from community members and support from the County Council have led Montgomery Parks to add new management locations at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park, Paint Branch Stream Valley Parks and Red Door Store Historic Park. In addition, lottery-based and cooperative managed deer hunts were held in 10 parks during fall 2014 and Park Police-based sharpshooting operations were conducted in 27 sites during early 2015.



For each deer management operation, Montgomery Parks must conduct deer population surveys, map legal safety zones and develop added safety zones, identify potential shooting locations and develop schedules for deer management and associated park closures. Montgomery Parks must also develop and update community and media outreach information, coordinate with volunteers and coordinate with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to acquire all necessary permits and to submit mandated reports for all operations. For managed hunt operations, the Department must conduct lotteries and approve and manage a roster of approximately 400 hunters. For sharpshooting operations, Montgomery Parks must coordinate with meat processors and the Capital Area Food Bank to deliver, process and donate approximately eight tons of meat annually.

**Upcoming Needs:** Although Montgomery Parks' Deer Management Program has been very successful, deer populations continue to expand into areas not currently under management. This is particularly true in more developed portions of the County. Additional staffing and funding is needed in fiscal year 2016 to expand deer management efforts into eight additional parcels of parkland and support the harvest of additional deer through both sharpshooting and a pilot archery program.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**



**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT INITIATIVE:** *Improving and constructing new parks and facilities to meet the demand of county residents is critical.*

### **FASCINATING FACTS:**

- Montgomery Parks builds and manages many different types of parks, ranging from small pockets in urban centers to large, recreational parks that offer many different activities.
- Funding for the purchase of future parkland of parks is included in the Parks Capital Improvements Program and comes from different land acquisition programs administered by the Department of Parks; The Capital Improvements Program also funds preliminary design, final design, and construction



- It can take up to seven years to complete a new park or a major renovation. The length of time needed for preliminary design through construction varies by project and depends on the availability and timing of the project funding as well as its scale and complexity.

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

PDF	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	BSY
Battery Lane Urban Park							
Brookside Master Plan Implementation (Visitor Center & Parking)							
Brookside Master Plan Implementation (Greenhouse and Plant Propagation Area)							
Elm Street Neighborhood Park							
Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park							
Falls Road Local Park - Parking Lot Expansion							
Germantown Town Center Urban Park							
Greenbriar Local Park							
Josiah Henson Historic Park							
Kemp Mill Urban Park							
Laytonia Recreational Park							
Little Bennett Interim Day Use Area							
M-NCPPC Headquarters Project							
North Four Corners Local Park							
North Branch Trail							
Rock Creek Maintenance Facility							
Seneca Crossing Local Park							
Warner Circle Special Park (Stabilization thru FY16; Reuse BSY)							
Western Grove Urban Park							
Wheaton Regional Park Trail Renovations							
Woodlawn Barn Visitors Center							
Woodside Urban Park							

■ Design    ■ Construction    ■ Procurement

#### Major Projects 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.

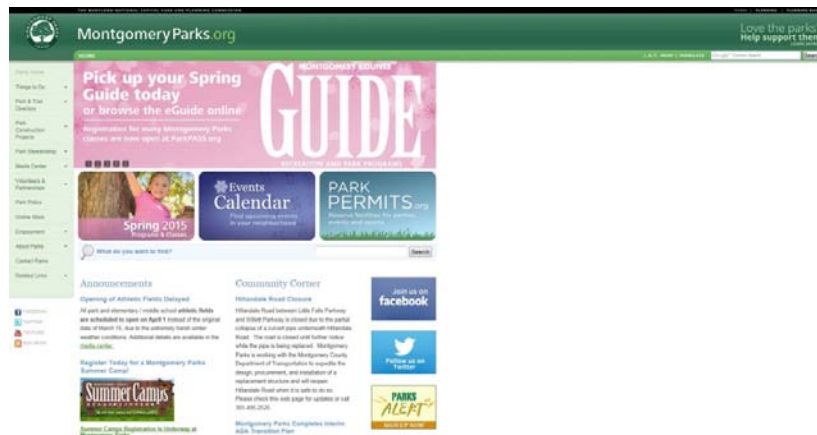
ADA Improvements at Parks Countywide

#### Recent projects that have been completed include:

- Expansion and renovation at Evans Parkway Local Park.
- Little Bennett Interim Day Use Area.
- Olney Manor Dog Park.
- Stabilization and renovation of historic properties at Warner Circle and Woodlawn Manor.

Projects planned for future construction include local park renovations for Wheaton-Claridge, Hillandale and Caroline Freeland parks. In addition, trail intersection safety improvements are planned countywide, as are improvements to the Rock Creek Hard Surface Trail. Ongoing Planned Infrastructure Maintenance Improvements are scheduled at playgrounds, ballfields, tennis/multi-use courts, trails, streams and many other park components countywide.

**Upcoming Needs:** A variety of talented staff at Montgomery Parks is dedicated to the planning, design, development and construction of parks, facilities and landscapes. This staff, which includes architects, engineers, landscape architects, project managers, land surveyors and construction inspectors, often struggles to complete and move projects forward because of the increasingly time-consuming administrative tasks that are required for each project. Montgomery Parks plans to request additional administrative staff support, which will in turn allow other staff to focus on implementing and completing



## Graphic Design and Web Redevelopment

**MARKETING, GRAPHIC DESIGN AND WEB REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE:** *Increasing awareness and involvement in Montgomery Parks facilities, programs, events and projects is critical to achieving Montgomery Parks' mission.*

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- More than 1.5 million people visited MontgomeryParks.org in FY14. On average, more than 125,000 people visit our site each month.
- Montgomery Parks hosts more than 9,300 web pages and more than 10,900 PDF documents via the MontgomeryParks.org website.
- Montgomery Parks' website hosts information about park planning and development efforts, park amenities and facilities, park programs and events, Department staff and initiatives and more.

**Increasing both awareness of and involvement in Montgomery Parks programs, facilities, parks and projects is critical to achieving the Department's mission.** As revealed in the Department's Vision 2030 Plan, resident surveys demonstrated a significant lack of awareness regarding parks, facilities, programs and events.

Although Montgomery Parks has seen notable results from developing coordinated Departmental marketing campaigns supporting summer camps, program registration, special events and park activity

building rentals, continued investment in marketing and outreach regarding our parks, programs, facilities and events is needed.

Although the website is the primary source of information about news, events, projects and plans for Montgomery Parks, and expectations for the Web continue to increase, both the website content and technology used to manage the site are outdated and challenging to use. Additionally, marketing campaigns and collateral will continually need to be updated as rebranding efforts for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission continue and new programs and facilities are introduced.

**Upcoming Needs:** In recognition of the important role that marketing campaigns, materials and websites play in ensuring Montgomery County residents are aware of, informed about and involved with the many programs, projects and facilities managed by Montgomery Parks, the Department plans to seek funding to support the

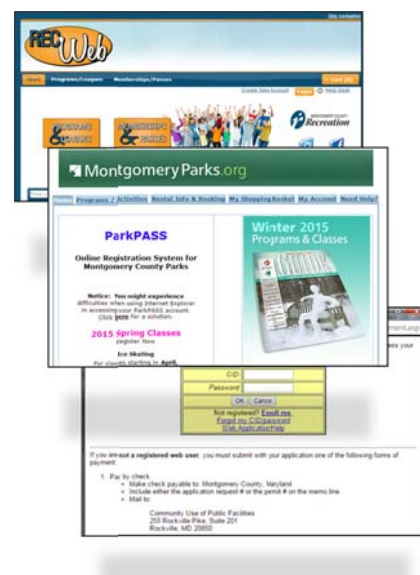
development of publications, advertising campaigns and a new Departmental website and associated applications.

## ActiveNet

**ACTIVENET:** *This online registration system is a collaboration among Montgomery Parks, Montgomery County Department of Recreation and Montgomery County's Community Use of Public Facilities.*

### FASCINATING FACTS:

- More than 19,000 program and event registrations are completed online each year; those represent 65.5 percent of total registrations.
- Nearly 4,000 programs and courses were offered during FY15.



**Montgomery Parks continues to collaborate with the Montgomery County Department of Recreation and Community Use of Public Facilities to develop a consolidated registration system for agency customers.** The system, ActiveNet, will allow residents to register for programs and facilities offered by each agency through a single registration system, rather than through three separate systems. Staff across each agency is working to transfer facility, program and user data into the new system. Upcoming efforts will focus on internal staff training, developing resources and tools for our staff and customers, and ensuring customers are aware that the new system will be available soon.

**Upcoming Needs:** Montgomery Parks has already budgeted for an overall system administrator, project manager and web designer to support the ActiveNet system; continued support of these positions is critical to the successful implementation of this project. Additionally, the Department must invest in the purchase of new point-of-sale equipment, which will include PIN pads, to ensure compliance with payment card industry (PCI) standards.

## Planning Director's Introduction

Over the past six months, the Planning Department has worked hard to retrofit and revitalize our suburbs by developing master plans and regulations promoting pedestrian-friendly, sustainable communities. The highlight of this effort was the enactment of the County's new Zoning Ordinance on October 30, 2014, after years of community meetings, stakeholder discussions and work sessions.

The new code is the most comprehensive update to the County's land use regulations since they were last revised in 1977. It allows flexibility for more housing in and around commercial centers, and encourages more mixed-use developments. At the same time, the new law provides greater protections for existing residential neighborhoods that might be impacted by new and infill development. In addition, the new code improves the efficiency of the development review process by stipulating a 120-day deadline for site plan approvals.

Significant progress has been made in improving our development review processes over the past six months, including the following steps:

- The first concept plan – a new service to applicants to identify development issues early on – is being processed.
- The Development Review Committee (DRC) is being revitalized with new direction and a recent DRC retreat.
- The record plat process is shorter due to ePlan submissions and increased staffing for review – and additional improvements are being developed.

Revitalizing key areas with appropriate zoning is one of the goals of our ongoing planning efforts in Montgomery Village, Aspen Hill and Westbard. Master plans that are currently being developed for Downtown Bethesda and Greater Lyttonsville recommend ways of reinforcing and improving the respective identities of these communities. All of these master plans build on the positive attributes of our communities while strengthening pedestrian connections, encouraging mixed-use development and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The Department's greater outreach efforts, including community workshops, happy hours and interactive digital surveys, are increasing public participation in the planning process to provide valuable feedback on our proposals. Our 2014-2015 Winter Speaker Series, hosted by former Planning Board Chair Royce Hanson, invited the public to learn about the past successes and new challenges of the County's planning policies. In February, the County's Agricultural Reserve was the subject of the speaker series and a new documentary film screened at the Planning Department. Both events focused on our continuing efforts to preserve working farms and rural land close to populous urban centers.

Another of our goals moving forward is improving the quality of the County's architecture and urban design. In January, as part of our Design Excellence Initiative, we invited urban design expert Nore Winter to meet with the Planning Board and the community, and consult with our staff on ways to develop more effective design guidelines for master plans. A staff photo contest held last fall pinpointed examples of good design to emulate in the County.

We look forward to developing more ways of enhancing the County's communities over the next six months. These projects focus on continuing the development process improvements, initiating new master plans and making progress on ongoing ones. They include studying rental housing, amending the Subdivision Regulations and creating new digital tools related to development review and zoning. At the same time, staff training, including core competency programs, will continue to increase the Department's planning skills and knowledge.

## Master Planning Highlights and Major Projects From the Past Six Months

### New Zoning Ordinance

On October 30, 2014, the Planning Department, Planning Board and members of the County Council held a symbolic burial ceremony for the County's old Zoning Ordinance and ushered in the new law and zoning map for the County. The up-to-date and user-friendly code encourages mixed-use, walkable and sustainable development. In addition, it improves the efficiency of the development review process by allowing more consolidated plan reviews, reducing redundant requirements and codifying review deadlines.



This code is the first comprehensive update to the County's land use regulations since they were last revised in 1977. Developing the new Zoning Ordinance required years of community meetings, stakeholder discussions, work sessions and redrafting. Learn more about the new Zoning Ordinance: [www.montgomeryplanning.org/zoning](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/zoning)

### Streamlined Development Review Process

As part of the newly enacted Zoning Ordinance, the process of reviewing proposed developments was streamlined to support economic growth and make it easier to do business in the County. The law now includes specific time frames for important steps in the process. Quick and efficient review and approval of development applications is good for the County in creating a predictable process for residents and applicants alike, increasing the County's tax base and providing needed housing. In order to accomplish the 120-day, acceptance-to-approval time frame required by the new Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Department is taking the following steps:

- Implementing a clear schedule, with interim review times, for all applications.
- Publishing a schedule of plan review and response dates on our website to alert customers of the review time frames before an application is submitted.
- Enabling applicants to work with decision makers at DRC meetings to determine solutions to identified problems instead of waiting to set up future work sessions.
- Implementing a voluntary concept plan process that allows prospective property owners to pose questions before investing too much in a project. Planning Department and Executive Agency staff members review the concept plan to identify major issues that would need to be addressed if the prospective property owners pursue development applications.





- Using ePlans for record plats to dramatically shorten review times. More and more, reviews by the Department of Permitting Services and the Planning Department are happening simultaneously, instead of sequentially, so the applicants receive consolidated comments. According to a very limited sample size, the ePlan review of record plats has reduced review times by two-thirds.

Find out more about the improvements to our Development Review Process:

[www.montgomeryplanning.org/development](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development)

### **New Web-based Tools**

The Planning Department's technology group launched new digital tools to support greater transparency in the development review process and make information about the new County Zoning Ordinance more readily available to the real estate community and the public. These websites and interactive maps provide the most recent information on zoning, development activity and contacts for civic and homeowner associations throughout Montgomery County.

During the process of updating the County Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Department used a new tool to provide side-by-side comparisons of the existing and proposed zoning. As work on the new code progressed, the public was directed to this website so they could learn about any changes that might affect their property. This tool also helped the Planning Board and County Council understand the differences between the old and new Zoning Ordinances during the review and approvals process.

After the Zoning Ordinance took effect on October 30, 2014, the official digital zoning map for the County was posted on a new website (<http://mcatlas.org/zoning/>). The map displayed on this site keeps pace with zoning changes adopted by County Council and is readily accessible. The site exports date-stamped zoning maps as PDFs directly from the official geographic information system maintained at the Planning Department and the maps can be printed out in different sizes.

### **Revised Subdivision Regulations**

Over the past several months, the Planning Department has been working on revising Chapter 50 of the current Montgomery County Code governing the subdivision of land. This effort, which was undertaken at the direction of the Montgomery County Council, represents the most comprehensive rewrite of the Subdivision Regulations in 50 years and responds to the County's newly released Zoning Ordinance.

The Subdivision Regulations include the application requirements for subdividing property, as well as requirements for adequate public facilities and improvements to lots based on the impact of subdivision. The goals of the rewrite are to create a more organized, user-friendly document and simplify the process for certain types of subdivision plans so they do not have to be presented to the Planning Board for review. In addition, review times for subdivision applications will conform to the Zoning Ordinance time frame of 120 days. A 90-day time limit is proposed for the review of a record plat application with a goal of recording the plat in 120 days.

The first draft of the amendment was released in November 2014 for technical review by staff from the Planning Department and Executive Branch. An updated draft was released to the public in December

2014 and a community meeting was held in January 2015 to present and discuss the revisions. A subsequent draft of the regulations was released in February and presented to the Planning Board in March. Find out more about the rewrite of the Subdivision Regulations Amendment:

[www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/subdivision\\_regulations](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/subdivision_regulations)

### **Silver Spring Placemaking Workshops**

Three Silver Spring Placemaking Workshops were held in October and November 2014 to discuss ideas for vibrant civic spaces in the Downtown Silver Spring area that build on the 2000 Silver Spring Sector Plan. They were initiated by Councilmember Hans Riemer in collaboration with the Montgomery County Planning and Parks Departments, and the Silver Spring Urban District. County planners joined Councilmember Riemer, community residents and other participants at the brainstorming sessions to develop creative ways of enhancing three downtown locations.



The first workshop explored the creation of civic space in the vicinity of the Transit Center. Enhancements to Gene Lynch Urban Park and ways to improve the pedestrian experience from the Transit Center to Downtown Silver Spring via Wayne Avenue were examined, along with proposals for temporary green spaces and bike service facilities in this location. The second workshop focused on the urban character of the Ripley District and enhancing pedestrian experiences in that area. The third workshop examined the areas surrounding the proposed Purple Line station in Downtown Silver Spring that are slated for high-density development.

In January 2015, Councilmember Riemer made a presentation to the Planning Board, relating specific suggestions for improvements to the three areas as a result of the workshops. These action items range from enhanced crosswalks, clearer signage and new bike lanes to outdoor movies, public art and food trucks. For each recommendation, a public agency or a corporate sponsor was suggested as a “champion” to help implement the changes. A report detailing the workshops as well as next steps will be released in spring 2015. Find out more about the Silver Spring Placemaking workshops:

[www.montgomeryplanning.org/silverspringplacemaking](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/silverspringplacemaking)

### **Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan**

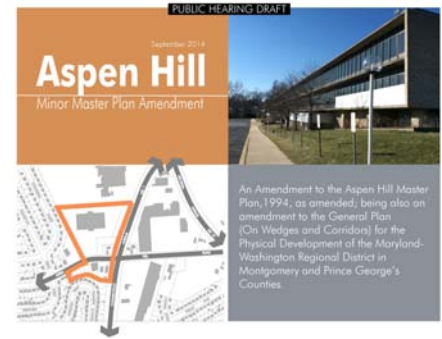
The Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan was approved unanimously by the County Council on February 24, 2015. This Plan considers how to best design a village center while preserving the rich cultural history and rural character of the area. Recommendations include a mix of land uses, connections, streetscapes and community gathering spaces. As part of the planning process, a four-day design workshop was held in February 2014 that drew more than 130 residents and business owner offering ideas for transforming the heart of Sandy Spring. Community work sessions continued over the next eight months. Approved by the Planning Board in September 2014, the Plan was then submitted to the County Executive and County Council in February 2015 for their review and approval. Find out more about the Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan:

[www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/sandyspring](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/sandyspring)



## Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment

The Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment considers possible redevelopment opportunities on approximately 14 acres of land located to the west of the Connecticut Avenue and Aspen Hill Road intersection. of this site was recommended for office zoning in the 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan, but the office market within the County has declined since then, prompting re-evaluation of the area, which includes a large, vacant office building (formerly Vitro/BAE). The amendment considers the area's potential within the context of this changing office market and surrounding land uses and transportation networks.



The Planning Board Draft Plan was transmitted to the County Executive and County Council in December 2014 and the County Council held a public hearing in February. Work sessions with the County Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee during March 2015 will be followed by Council action in early April. Learn more about the Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment:

[www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/aspenhill](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/aspenhill)

## Bethesda Downtown Plan

Over the past six months, Planning Department staff worked with residents, property owners and other stakeholders to refine the vision, "A Truly Sustainable Downtown," for the Bethesda Downtown Plan. This plan builds on the success of this area as a popular commercial destination and district surrounded by residential neighborhoods. It aims to create a model of smart growth by addressing the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability. A key goal for the plan is to sustain Downtown Bethesda as a competitive economic force in the region.



For the past six months, the team engaged with residents and property and business owners throughout the downtown area through a live online forum and digital questionnaire. This online questionnaire, called a "feedback loop," encouraged the public to offer views on a number of concepts, ranging from bike paths to building heights, being proposed for the Plan. From this feedback, planners were able to confirm their understanding of the community's priorities for Downtown Bethesda. An interactive map was launched that includes information about specific parcels within the Plan area. The community was encouraged to use the map to communicate with staff about updates to properties under consideration during the sector planning process.

The Plan Concepts, including new gathering spaces, parks, transportation options and allowable building heights, were summarized at a Planning Board meeting in December 2014. The results of the Retail Planning Strategy Study were also presented at that session to convey the type, locations and number of stores in Bethesda likely to be competitive in the future. A public meeting held in January 2015 provided additional feedback from the community on the Plan Concepts. Efforts to engage millennials, who are typically underrepresented in the planning process, resulted in several happy hours in Bethesda

sponsored by local businesses. Discover the latest developments in the Bethesda Downtown Plan: [www.bethesdadowntownplan.org](http://www.bethesdadowntownplan.org)

### Westbard Sector Plan

A weeklong, intensive design “charrette” was held in November 2014 to advance the Westbard Sector Plan. The public brainstorming sessions were attended by many stakeholders, including landowners, business owners, homeowners and representatives from various state and local agencies. The workshops resulted in a Concept Framework Plan with preliminary recommendations for transportation, retail, housing and trails and open spaces. Staff presented the proposed framework to the Planning Board in December and is now refining the plan, with the next community meeting scheduled for April 2015. Learn more about the Westbard Sector Plan: [www.montgomeryplanning.org/planwestbard](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/planwestbard)



### Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan

Re-launched in 2014, the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan is progressing to address the needs of this neighborhood as well as the potential impact of two proposed Purple Line stations. To produce a Sector Plan supportive of the area’s character, staff developed community engagement strategies to educate stakeholders about the planning process while garnering much needed input. A visioning workshop was held in September 2014 to brainstorm ideas with the public about six areas within Greater Lyttonsville. The workshop included an interactive exercise to explore community character as it relates to open space, streetscapes, environmental elements, land uses, buildings and community facilities. In addition to this grassroots outreach, new media tools such as online questionnaires helped the staff understand community priorities that helped them craft the initial Preliminary Concept Framework Plan.



The Planning Board was briefed on this framework in October 2014 and the planning concepts were presented at a public meeting in January 2015, along with the results of a recent economic development study completed by Washington, DC-based consultant Bolan Smart. The concept framework recommendations will be discussed with the community at a public meeting in April 2015, followed by a presentation to the Planning Board. Learn more about the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan: [www.montgomeryplanning.org/greaterLP](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/greaterLP)

### Montgomery Village Master Plan

The first discrete master plan for the planned community Montgomery Village is well underway. The area covered by the Montgomery Village Master Plan generally conforms to the boundaries of the 2,435-acre planned community of Montgomery Village. The Montgomery Village Master Plan will not address the alternatives that are being considered for M-83 by the



Department of Transportation and the Army Corps of Engineers, since final decisions about M-83 are unlikely to be resolved within the expedited time frame of this plan.

The plan's initial strategies were approved by the Planning Board in December 2014. Planning staff conducted an aggressive outreach effort during January and February 2015, including the MV Matters series of community meetings at Watkins Mill High School that focused on how best to rezone the entire Village since the Town Sector zone is no longer available.

To engage Hispanic residents, who account for more than 27 percent of the population in Montgomery Village, staff developed Spanish-language planning materials, online videos and a bus signage campaign. Planning Board Commissioner Natali Fani-Gonzalez played an instrumental role in engaging members of the Latino community and encouraging them to participate in the Montgomery Village Master Plan. Learn more about the Montgomery Village Master Plan: [www.montgomeryplanning.org/mvp](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/mvp)

### Community Outreach Efforts

In addition to public meetings and workshops, the Planning Department's outreach efforts expanded to engage more citizens in the planning process through the use of technology, including new digital tools and online surveys, social media and videos. To encourage younger people to participate in the Bethesda Downtown Plan, happy hours were sponsored by several local businesses. The most recent happy hour, held in January 2015, was well attended by millennials.

In November 2014, the Planning Department launched its Winter Speakers Series, titled ***A Once and Future County: Lessons From How Planning Politics Shaped Montgomery County***. The five evening sessions continued through March 2015 and offered presentations by Royce Hanson, former Chair of the County's Planning Board, panel discussions among regional planning experts and question-and-answer sessions with attendees. Topics included the history of retrofitting the suburbs, planning around transit corridors and relationships among growth policies and development patterns. Learn more about the five-part Winter Speaker Series:

[www.montgomeryplanning.org/onceandfuture](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/onceandfuture)

Coinciding with a speaker event on the County's Agricultural Reserve, a free screening of the film titled "Growing Legacy" was held at the Planning Department headquarters in February 2015. The nonprofit Montgomery Countryside Alliance launched the project to share the story of the Agricultural Reserve with local schools and communities so they might better appreciate this 93,000-acre farming area in their own backyard. Events like the movie screening and Winter Speaker series are important to communicating the accomplishments of the Planning Department to public audiences.



The Planning Department's outreach efforts have also helped citizens to save money through a public awareness campaign about the County's Historic Preservation Tax Credit program. In 2013, the County Council increased the credit from 10 to 25 percent of documented expenses for exterior maintenance, restoration or preservation work. Publicizing this increase led the Historic Preservation Office to use a mix



of traditional and new media, and garner 87 approved projects in 2014, up from 39 the prior year. The 87 projects represent \$2.2 million invested in historic properties across the County.



### **Infrastructure Forum**

On March 7, 2015, the Planning Department participated in the community forum, "Infrastructure and Growth: Are We Keeping Pace?" hosted by County Councilmember Roger Berliner. This public event served to inform and engage county residents about current school and transportation planning policies and procedures, and encourage them to meet with public officials and provide feedback about their communities. It provided the opportunity for the County Council, Executive Branch, Montgomery County Public Schools and Planning Department to collaborate and discuss creative approaches and solutions to managing growth in the County. The event served as a kickoff for the Planning Department's revisions to the County's Subdivision Staging Policy (formerly called "Growth Policy"). This policy will be updated to ensure that our public facilities infrastructure is adequate to accommodate new development and population growth in the County.

### **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 fall 2014 with an all-staff Photo Awards Contest to expand and update the library of photos used in our marketing, planning, parks and design guidelines work. The goal is to collect and present the best and most relevant images of urban, suburban and rural places when recommending design models to developers and communities.



In January 2015, the Planning Department advanced its Design Excellence Initiative by consulting with nationally recognized urbandesign and planning expert Noré Winter for three days. Winter met with planning staff to discuss the best ways to create and implement effective design guidelines and then

presented many of these ideas to the public at an evening event. He also made a presentation to the Planning Board about the

importance of design guidelines in reinforcing County policies, inspiring high quality development while maintaining flexibility and generating value for our neighborhoods.

Next steps in continuing the Design Excellence Initiative include the creation of a 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](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/design)



### **Purple Line Advocacy**

Public transit, including Metrorail and buses, was the subject of heightened advocacy and regulatory efforts over the past six months. In December 2014, Montgomery County Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson and Prince George's Planning Board Chair Elizabeth Hewlett wrote a letter to newly elected Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and his team to outline the sound business reasons for keeping the 16-mile Purple Line on track. As they pointed out, the light-rail project will spur investment around the line's 21 stations, raise property values and increase State revenues. It will attract new development, housing, businesses and residents so Montgomery County can stay competitive in the region. The Planning Department's technical assistance for the Purple Line and the inclusion of pedestrian-oriented streetscapes in area master plans are based on a desire to improve the quality of the public realm while offering new transportation options.



## **Planning Department Major Goals and Trends for the Next Six Months**

### **Implementing the New Zoning Code**

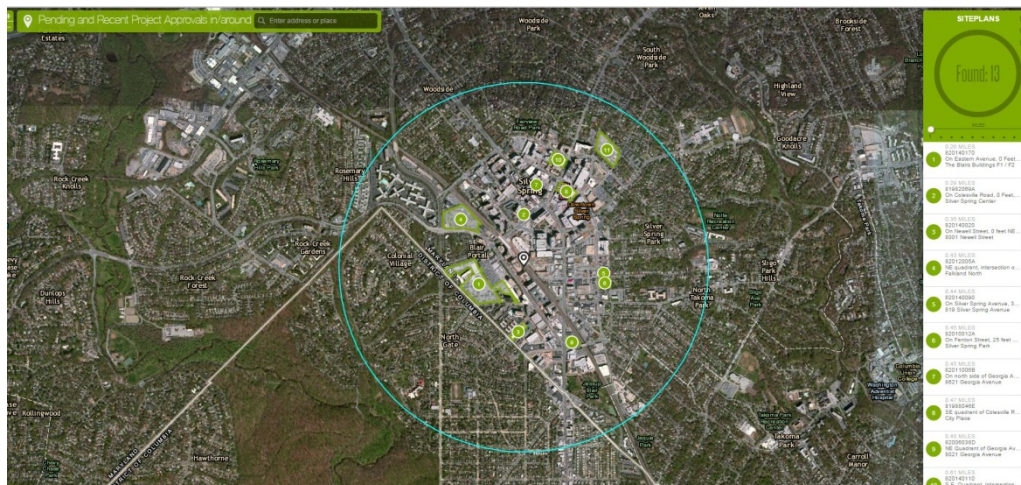
Following the Council's approval of the rewritten Zoning Ordinance, which became effective on October 30, 2014, staff has focused on implementing the new code and providing training to other County agencies and the public on the best practices for using the new code. The staff has already participated in 14 training sessions since September and has created several digital tools to help property owners use and understand the new code (see following section). These efforts will continue over the next six months.



### **Refining New Web-based Tools**

The Planning Department's technology group is continuing to develop new digital tools to provide accurate land use and development information. These web sites improve the ability for the real estate community to analyze data and reduce the time and red tape involved with doing business in Montgomery County. Now, property owners can use new web tools to analyze regulatory elements

without having to visit the Department in person. Having this rich data freely available to the public going forward should help generate innovation for our jurisdiction as well.



New user-friendly applications include the Development Finder, an easy-to-use and mobile-friendly tool for finding proposed and recently approved development projects in the County. Behind the scenes, this website is constantly updated to reflect the Planning Department's latest decisions so that it presents the newest information and document access.

The Planning Department continues to update a database of contacts for civic and homeowner associations in the County for the purpose of notifying these organizations about proposed development or rezoning applications. With a simple click on the map, this new website generates an up-to-date mailing list of the association contacts as well as property owners in any area. This mailing list generator serves County agencies and the development community alike, and works on both desktop and mobile devices.

### Revising the Subdivision Regulations

Rewriting the Subdivision Regulations will continue with work sessions scheduled for April and May 2015. Submittal of the regulations to the Montgomery County Council is planned for mid-May. A website has been set up to provide information about the project, post the latest documents and solicit comments.



### Updating Subdivision Staging Policy

The Subdivision Staging Policy will be revised to promote strategies designed to balance the impact of growth on the County with the capacity of infrastructure such as transportation and schools. The intent of the revisions is to ensure public facilities are





adequate to accommodate new development and growth in the County. 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 revising the Subdivision Staging Policy.

### **Studying Rental Housing**

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) is coordinating with the Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) to conduct an 18-24-month study of rental housing in the County that will assess how we can best meet the needs of residents across the income spectrum. The project contract is managed by the Planning Department.



The study will identify rental units that are currently without deed restrictions or other controls ensuring long-term affordability, but are nevertheless considered affordable based on monthly rents. It 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 affordable rental housing units in Montgomery County. In addition, potential changes to current policies and programs will be recommended to help guarantee long-term affordability of rental housing.

### **Analyzing Ways of Combining Public Facilities**

The Planning Department is undertaking research aimed at helping 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 developed.

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 study researches examples of public facilities colocation throughout the region and nationally; determines

potential partnerships for sharing resources and generating cost-savings for site development; identifies existing publicly owned sites and develops a process to prepare plans and implementation strategies. The Planning Department will extend its study to include the possible colocation for police and fire stations, libraries and neighborhood services centers, as well as schools. This effort will involve different public agencies and private sector stakeholders.

### **Revising the Recreation Guidelines**

The Planning Department is revising the existing Recreation Guideline 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 will be used during the review of site plans required in the 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.



### **Advancing Design Excellence**

The Planning Department will continue to work with consultants to develop new design guidelines for master plans. Staff will study the ways in which Commercial Residential (CR) Zone incentives can encourage better designs, public amenities and value for communities. Next steps include drafting design guidelines for active master plans (Downtown Bethesda, Westbard, Greater Lyttonsville and Montgomery Village). As a result of the planners' recent consultation with Noré Winter, these documents will include greater detail to guide the implementation of community goals and ideals.



In addition, Planning staff is working with the Potomac Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to create an annual Montgomery County Planning Department Design Excellence Award to be given at the AIA chapter's annual awards ceremony in fall 2015. This award is intended to promote and inspire design excellence in public and private developments within Montgomery County. The goal is to raise awareness among staff and the public of what constitutes Great Urban, Great Suburban and Great Rural designs that are unique to each community through presentations and web publications, including the re-launch of the Planning Department's planning blog.





### Developing New Types of Community Outreach

The Planning Department intends to expand the innovative community outreach methods used in past master planning efforts. Its priority is to deliver a consistent, clear and wide-reaching message to the community on multiple platforms, including print, web, video and social media channels. Increased use of the digital town hall tool Mindmixer, online questionnaires and mobile-friendly, visual preferences surveys will help to reach a wider audience and allow citizens to respond to planning issues on their own schedules.



### Staff Training

To familiarize staff with our latest projects, the Department is providing educational and idea-sharing opportunities on a regular basis. Core competency training allows staff to learn from in-house experts about important planning topics. Future sessions will address design guidelines, historic preservation programs and social media tools. Regularly held "office hours" allow staff to consult with experts within the Department to broaden their understanding of specific planning issues and regulations. The goal is to strengthen the Department's knowledge base and improve the entire organization.

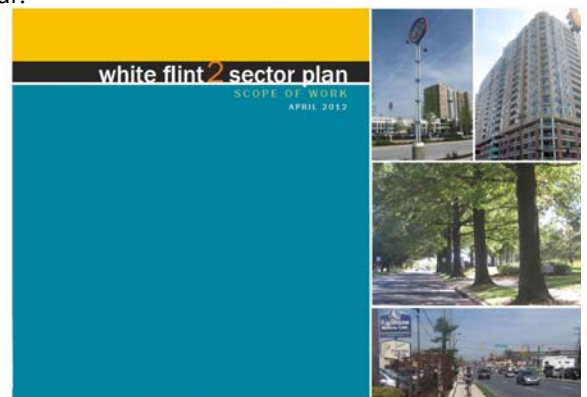


## New Master Planning Efforts, Studies and Regulatory Initiatives Over the Next Six Months

The Planning Department is proposing a vigorous work program for FY16. The goal of the work program is to maintain a busy schedule that includes Master and Sector Plans, Small Area Plans and Functional Plans, as well as completing a variety of other important studies. These efforts will be scheduled appropriately so that they can be transmitted to the Council with adequate time for review – this effort translates to delivering four to five major work products per year.

### White Flint II Sector Plan

The White Flint II Sector Plan was deferred three years ago due to more urgent priorities after Planning Board approval of the Project Scope of Work. It is now scheduled to begin in June 2015 to address 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. Coordination with the White Flint Implementation Advisory Committee, Friends of White Flint and City of Rockville will be essential elements of the community outreach efforts.



### **Aspen Hill Master Plan**

Updating the 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan will begin in July 2015. This effort will assess the potential of all the aging commercial centers in the master plan area and whether the re-mapped zones provide appropriate flexibility of uses to ensure their long-term future. It will also identify opportunities to improve connectivity while preserving and enhancing the existing residential neighborhoods.



### **Shady Grove Sector Plan Amendment**

Work on an amendment to the Shady Grove Sector Plan is proposed to begin in summer 2015. This update will consider the possibility of a mixed-use project near the Shady Grove Metrorail station and potential adjustments to the staging in the approved and adopted 2006 Shady Grove Sector Plan.

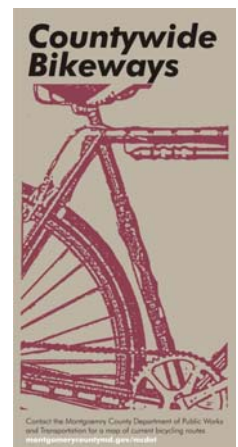


### **Bikeways Master Plan**

A comprehensive update to the Master Plan of Bikeways will recommend a network of bikeways and bicycle storage, reflect the latest thinking in bicycle planning. Since the Master Plan of Bikeways was last comprehensively updated in 2005, the cycling world has changed substantially in the following ways:

- Bicycle facilities have expanded to include separated and buffered bicycle lanes, bicycle boulevards and bicycle storage facilities.
- Planning methods have advanced to better determine the different types of bicyclists and their needs.
- The number of cyclists in the County is increasing rapidly because of higher bike usage by the younger generation and introduction of Capital Bikeshare.

The updated Master Plan will identify a high-quality bikeway network that will make bicycling a more attractive option to most people. Some County residents are interested in bicycling but are concerned for their safety; they will bicycle more when a network of physically separated bikeways is put in place. A bicycle network that is tailored to meet the needs of the various types of bicyclists will meet latent demand, as well as support our economic activity centers and help 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.



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### **MARC Rail Station Plan: Germantown And Boyds**

This proposed plan will evaluate land use, zoning, design and access conditions at the Germantown MARC Station. It will focus

on the area that was not part of the 2009 Germantown Employment Area Sector Plan. The plan will recommend ways of creating a transit station area that is sensitive to the history, character and scale of this historic part of Germantown, while providing additional opportunities for physical and operational improvements to the station and enhancements to commuter rail service in Montgomery County. This effort is based on currently ongoing studies by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and Mass Transit Administration of parking and access issues at MARC stations in the County, including the stations in Germantown and Boyds.



In Boyds, 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, which are currently studying potential access and parking arrangements, this plan will consider land uses and alternative arrangements for existing surface parking and access. Possible implementation methods could include joint development arrangements or public-private partnerships that could involve structured or surface parking, mixed residential and commercial uses, and access improvements for the rail station.

### Proposed Changes to the FY16 Master Plan and Major Projects Schedule

The work program submitted with our FY16 budget proposal is attached to this Semi-Annual Report; however, the Department is suggesting that the Council consider some revisions based on information that was unavailable last fall. The proposed shift to the FY16 Master Plan and Major Projects Schedule is as follows:

Plan	Planning Board Draft Transmitted	Shift Of:
Bethesda Downtown Plan	Nov. 2015	7 months
Greater Lyttonsville Plan	April 2016	9 months
Westbard Plan	Jan. 2016	4 months
Montgomery Village Master Plan	Dec. 2015	2 months
Highways Master Plan/Tech. Corrections and Updates	Feb. 2017	15 months (to coordinate with master plan of bikeways)
Shady Grove MMP	July 2016	3 months
MARC Rail Stations (Germantown and Boyds) Plan	Sept. 2016	3 months
Bikeways Plan Update	April 2017	5 months
Aspen Hill and Vicinity Plan	Sept. 2017	4 months
Rock Spring Plan	Feb. 2017	5 months (shifted forward)

### Regulatory Review Highlights

The data shows that the number of development applications and building permits received in the first six months of FY15, once projected over an entire 12 month period, are consistent with FY13 and FY14. However, the number of record plats and mandatory referrals accepted are projected to be lower in FY15 when compared to FY13 and FY14. Exhibit 1. (below) identifies the number of plans received by the Montgomery County Planning Department for FY13 and FY14 and for the first six months of FY15.

Exhibit 1. Plans Accepted by Application Type and Fiscal Year			
Application Type	FY13	FY14	First Six-Months FY15
Development Applications	482	519	271
Record Plats	155	162	65
Special Exceptions	24	9	8
Mandatory Referrals	38	50	14
Building Permits	1,397	1,426	693
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,096</b>	<b>2,166</b>	<b>1,051</b>

Exhibit 1 above shows the number of applications accepted by the Planning Department. Exhibit 2 (below) shows compares the number of new applications accepted and applications with a final decision, by plan type, for FY13, FY14 and the first six months of FY15. The projected number of development applications with a final decision for FY15 is expected to exceed FY13 and FY15. It is also anticipated that the projected number of record plats with a final decision will almost double the number of record plats with a final decision in FY14. The quicker review of record plats is expected because of changes already instituted for record plat reviews including the use of ePlans by all reviewing agencies, sending of consolidated comments to applicants and elimination of numerous standard notes from the record plats.

Exhibit 2. Number of Plans Accepted <sup>1</sup> with a Final Decision <sup>2</sup> by Application Type						
Application Type	FY13		FY14		First Six Months FY15	
	Accepted	Final Decision	Accepted	Final Decision	Accepted	Final Decision
<b>Development Applications</b>	482	341	519	368	271	190
<b>Record Plats</b>	155	160	162	79	65	63
<b>Special Exceptions</b>	24	20	9	2	8	2
<b>Mandatory Referrals</b>	38	29	50	20	14	11
<b>Building Permits</b>	1,397	1,602	1,426	1,730	693	739
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,096</b>	<b>2,152</b>	<b>2,099</b>	<b>2,199</b>	<b>1,051</b>	<b>1,005</b>
1. "Accepted" refers to the number of new plans submitted and accepted as complete. 2. "Final decision" refers to plans approved, denied or forwarded with a recommendations to other branches of County government, and plans that were approved, denied or not confirmed by staff. Does not apply to record plats, which are calendar days.						

### Application Review Times

The Planning Department's database allows staff to track application processing and review times. Exhibit 3 (below) indicates the average number of review days for some of the major plan types submitted and approved for FY13 and FY14 and for the first six months of FY15. The data does not include any time or delays that may have occurred while waiting for an applicant to respond to comments, or when the Planning Department is waiting for other agency approvals before scheduling a Planning Board hearing. The average review times refer to the time it takes staff to process all applications of a particular type, from plan acceptance to the Planning Board hearing, or Director's approval, whichever is appropriate.



**Exhibit 3. Number of Plans with a Final Decision<sup>1</sup> and  
Average Review Days<sup>2</sup> by Plan Type for FY13, FY14, and FY15**

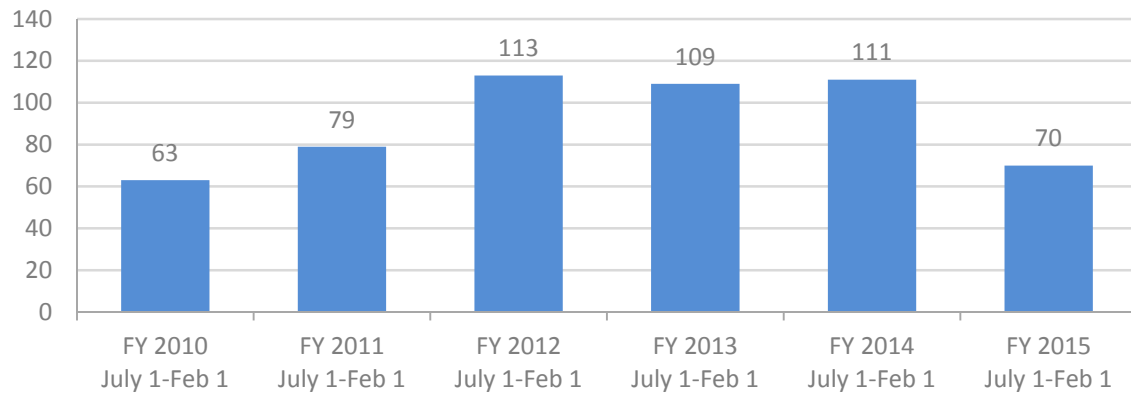
<b>Application Type</b>	<b>FY13 Plans with Final Decision</b>	<b>FY13 Average Review Days</b>	<b>FY14 Plans with Final Decision</b>	<b>FY14 Average Review Days</b>	<b>First 6- month FY15 Plans with Final Decision</b>	<b>FY15 Average Review Days</b>
<b>Preliminary Plans</b> New Applications	37	102	19	114	14	115
<b>Site Plans</b> New Applications	22	105	18	132	10	88
<b>Record Plats</b>	160	328	79	382	63	396

1. "Final Decision" refers to plans approved; plans with a recommendation to other County government agencies; and plans that were approved, denied or not confirmed by staff.
2. Review days are calculated from plan acceptance to final decision minus all review stops, except for record plats which are calendar days.

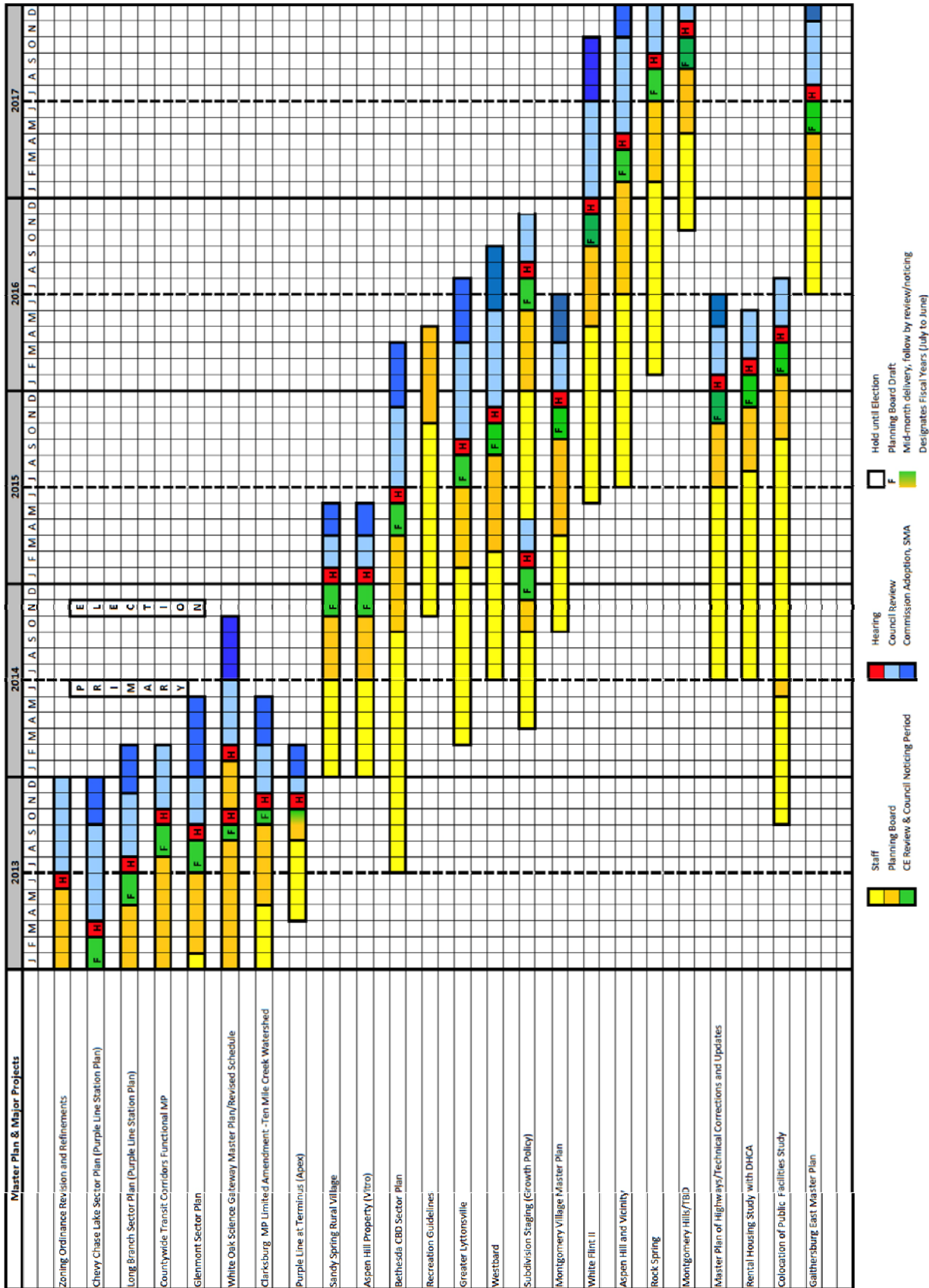
The data shows that the preliminary plans, on average, take less than 120 days of staff time to review from acceptance to Planning Board approval. This is not surprising considering the array of issues that must be considered for any preliminary plan of subdivision, including: adequate public facilities; public vs. private streets; storm water concept/special protection water quality plans; forest conservation; etc. The average staff review time for site plans decreased in the first six months of FY15. None of the site plans in the data set include any site plans reviewed under the 120-day regulatory clock. The regulatory clock only became effective for any new site plan accepted after October 30, 2014. The number of record plats with a final decision is an increase from previous years. Changes have occurred to the review process that speed up the process; however, the first six months of FY15 do not show any improvement. In this data set, only three plans were submitted and reviewed under the new processes, and the data for the first six months is skewed by a large number of plans that took many years to complete.

Since the new processes have been in place, starting on July 1, 2014, record plat reviews have decreased considerably. In the first seven months of the new process, the first review of record plats took 34 days, 76 total days for all reviews to be completed and 119 days from submission to Board approval for the plats that have reached that milestone.

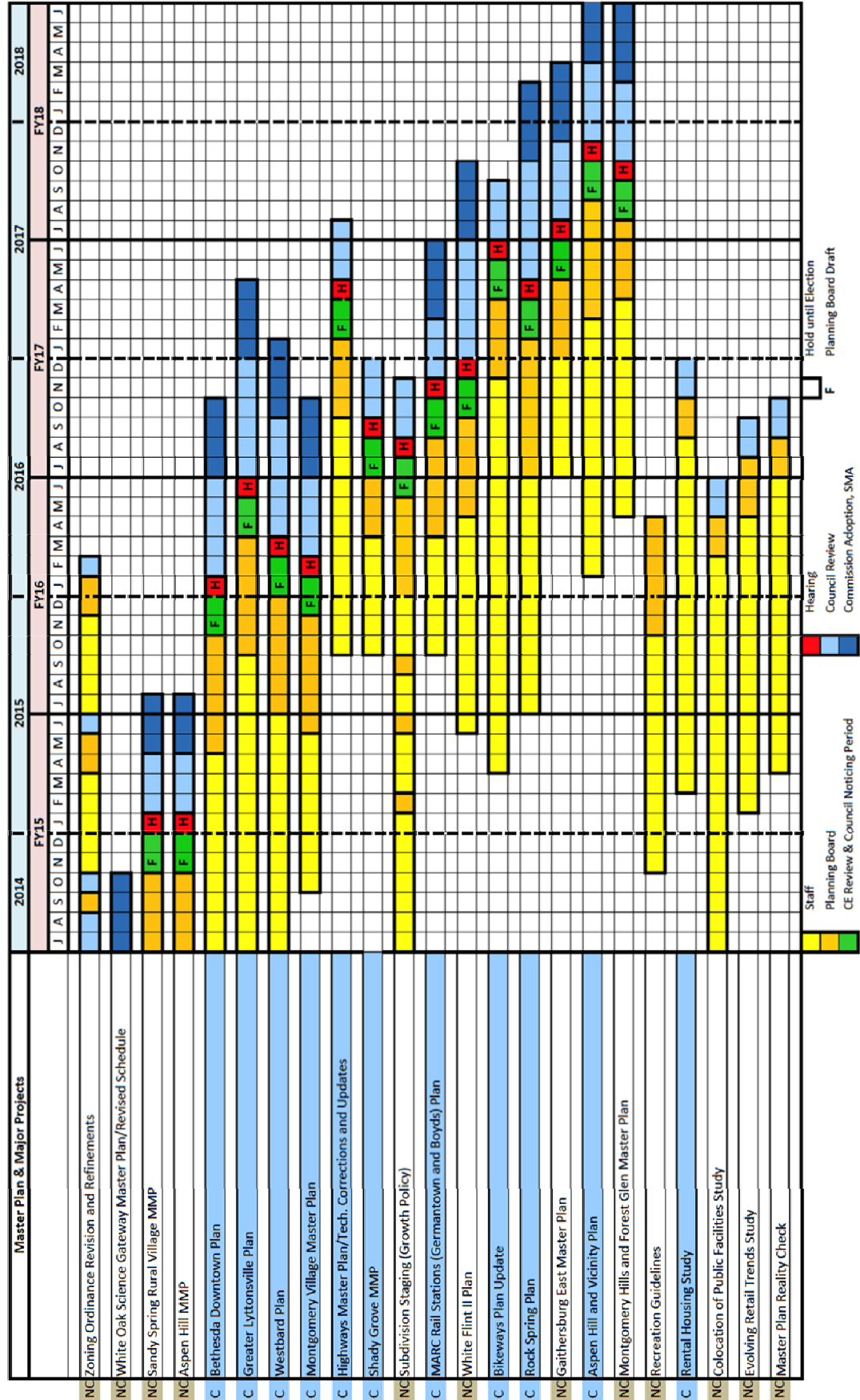
**Exhibit 4. Submitted Record Plats, July 2009 - February 2015**



## FY15 Adopted



# FY16 Proposed Master Plans and Major Projects Schedule Revised 3.5.15



C = Change From FY15 Adopted

NC = No Change From FY15 Adopted





# Semi-Annual Report

Spring 2015



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MontgomeryParks.org | MontgomeryPlanning.org  
M-NCPPC Montgomery County