

spring 2009

semi-annual report

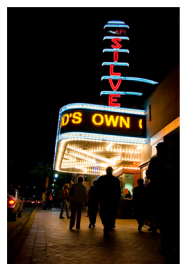


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letter from the chairman

President Andrews and Members of the Council:

We are pleased to present the spring 2009 semi-annual report for the Montgomery County Planning Board/Parks Commission and its operating departments. It has been a productive six months.

Planning Department accomplishments include:

- Transmitting the Final Draft Plan amending the Germantown Master Plan to the Council.
- Recommending the preferred alignment and mode for the Purple Line.
- Recommending an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.
- Recommending an amendment to the Master Plan of Transportation for the ICC bikeway.
- Securing approval of the Twinbrook Sector Plan and completing work on the TMX Zone and preparing the Sectional Map Amendment.
- Finalizing the Wheaton CBD Limited Master Plan Amendment and preparing the SMA.
- Beginning work sessions on the White Flint Sector Plan.
- Accepting the draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan and scheduling work sessions.
- Accepting the Housing Element of the General Plan and scheduling a public hearing.
- Completing the diagnosis phase of the comprehensive revision of the zoning ordinance and convening a zoning advisory group to work with staff on revisions to the ordinance.
- During the prior six months, the Board has acted on:
 - 41 subdivisions
 - 5 project plans
 - 45 site plans
 - 37 forest conservation plans
 - 18 mandatory referrals

Department of Parks accomplishments include:

- Completing facility plans for phase one for Woodstock Equestrian Park (appropriation request for non-county funding has been approved by the Council).
- Replacing the Wheaton Tennis facility and opening it for play.
- Fitting out the Wisconsin Place Community Recreation Center and opening for operation by the Recreation Department.
- Obtaining permits and soliciting bids for the King Dairy Barn Mooseum.
- Starting construction on the Rock Creek Trail Pedestrian Bridge over Veirs Mill Road.
- Acquiring 68.7 acres of new parkland, including 50.3 purchased through the CIP, 12.7 acres dedicated through the development review process, and 5.7 acres as a gift.
- Building or improving miles of trails and completing the Matthew Henson Trail extension.
- Renovating 19 ball fields and building/renovating seven playgrounds.
- Expanding the volunteer program.
- Initiated a pilot program in community gardening.
- Taking the lead on the state No Child Left Inside program with Montgomery County Public Schools.
- Streamlining permit office processes to allow customers greater self-service and improve their ability to find and book the facilities that best suit their needs.

As we prepare for FY 2010 budget discussions, we hope the report will stimulate guidance on the directions and priorities we should pursue during the coming fiscal year. The Board would especially value discussion of the following issues:

In Planning:

The 2009-2011 Growth Policy. Should growth policy direct most growth toward transit-served centers and other strategic locations to create communities that are economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable? We will be prepared to discuss preliminary ideas.

Master Plans. Plans for Kensington, Wheaton CBD, and Takoma/Langley will be sent to Council for its action before October 2010. Should extended master plan priorities include plans for station areas on the Purple Line, and a new plan for the U.S. 29/White Oak area containing the FDA facilities and the proposed relocation of Adventist Hospital?

Zoning Code Revision. The diagnosis stage has been completed and a stakeholders Zoning Advisory Panel has been established to help craft the new ordinance. We expect the first major revision to involve a commercial/residential mixed use district that could replace a number of commercial and mixed use Euclidean and floating zones. Are there particular issues the Council wants the revision to address?

In Parks:

Participation in Relocation of Shady Grove Facilities. The Department of Parks is examining several sites for relocation of our Central Maintenance and Training facilities from Crabbs Branch Way. Whether we co-locate with executive agencies or move to a separate site, acquisition and construction costs will be in the tens of millions of dollars. If these costs are not to be financed with county G.O. bonds, we need Council guidance on priorities for Commission debt limits, since it will need to include local park acquisition and development (absent POS funds), and replacement of the MRO.

Energy Conservation. We would like to brief the Council on how we have achieved substantial reductions in overall energy costs even as unit costs have increased and discuss how this program may be expanded.

Improving Coordination with the Department of Recreation. The Director of Parks and the Director of Recreation met shortly after the PHED Committee work session on March 9, 2009, to develop an action plan to immediately address issues related to customer confusion and program overlap. Interagency teams are being formed to identify the best approach to coordinate program offerings, provide integrated registration, collaborate on special events and marketing efforts, and update the 2004 MOU. The kick-off program coordination meeting will take place in March or April, and Parks staff is already exploring alternatives that would allow seamless registration for all programs.

General Issues:

Budget and Cost Savings. We expect to keep high vacancy rates in both Parks and Planning to save costs. The retirement incentives program instituted this fiscal year resulted in savings that will be more

fully realized in FYs 2010 and 2011. Reorganization of the Planning Department and the Commissioners' Office has also resulted in abolishing several management positions. Operating costs for the MRO remain high, due to the obsolescence of the MRO and its infrastructure and the fact that almost half the departmental work force is housed in leased quarters.

Silver Place. The Board is recalculating costs of replacing the MRO to account for recent declines in construction costs and to keep the project affordable within current funding constraints and debt service limitations. Replacement remains the best long-term solution, from both cost and operational perspectives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Rappaport". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
March 2009

planning

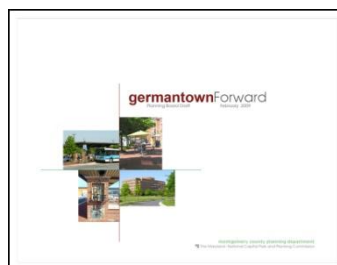
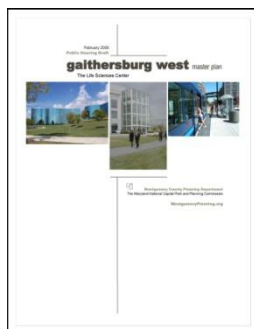
what we've done

Rethinking zoning. The Planning Department concluded its discovery phase, which diagnosed problems with the zoning code and began to address solutions. Our Zoning Discovery report, which staff delivered to the PHED committee in January, recommends ways to restructure to fewer, more meaningful use districts, better accommodate sustainable change, and create consistency in land use regulations. In March, the board convened an advisory panel to work with staff on the project, which will result in a more functional, better organized zoning code.

Purple Line. Our transportation staff drafted a comprehensive report on the proposed Purple Line that served as the basis for the county's recommendations on mode and alignment. The report draft received input from a citizens advisory committee that met with staff for more than a year.

Master Planning. We have made great strides on a number of master plans. The Planning Board has sent the **Germantown Sector Plan** to the County Executive and drafts of the **White Flint Sector Plan** and the **Gaithersburg West Master Plan** are in Planning Board work sessions. In addition, planners have finished and delivered the **Georgia Avenue Concept Study**, sent revisions to the **Housing Functional Master Plan** to the board, and secured approval of the **Wheaton Limited Master Plan Amendment**.

Historic Preservation. The Planning Board transmitted four amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, recommending the designation of a portion of the Falkland Apartments in Silver Spring and Wild Acres in Bethesda as well as historic resources in the Damascus-Goshen and Germantown areas of the County.



Regulatory Caseload. Development review staff analyzed applications and coordinated comments from other divisions and agencies to prepare staff reports for the board on development proposals. Many of the projects continued to be complex and require innovative solutions to promote public goals like infill development.

Reorganization and its Dividends. Our planning department reorganization and retirement incentive program yielded many benefits, including:

- fewer management positions
- multi-tasking to meet workload
- fewer divisions, with a drop in community planning teams from six to four
- better integration of staff
- faster production of publications and outreach materials

Plan Type	Received		Brought to P.B.		Pending
	10/1/08–3/31/09	Fiscal YTD	10/1/08–3/31/09	Fiscal YTD	Fiscal YTD
Preliminary	32	49	41	54	110*
Project	1	1	5	7	3
Site***	29	43	45	77	36
Forest Conservation**	38	72	37	67	151*
Mandatory Referrals**	37	53	18	34	19
TOTAL	137	218	146	239	319

* Some plans are backlogged from previous years because of applicant or other agency delays.

** Some plans are approved by the Planning Department, not the board

***Includes director-level, consent and limited amendments

Growing Smarter Speaker Series. The board re-launched its popular speaker series, attracting experts in the field to address the board, staff, and the general public on a variety of topical issues, from green building to stormwater management. The series also serves as way for professionals such as architects and planners to receive credits for continuing education, providing a venue to learn new, cutting-edge strategies while reducing the costs of certification maintenance.



where we're headed

In the coming six months, the Planning Department will:

Advance the Zoning Rewrite Project. The zoning advisory panel will help staff build on the diagnosis phase and begin the reorganization of the current code into a more streamlined product with fewer zones. An initial step will involve looking at how to create mixed-use zones that will encourage developers to build more sustainably, such as mixing living units and workplaces.

Deliver a 2009-2011 Growth Policy Focused on Sustainable Growth. To better align the Growth Policy with critical issues

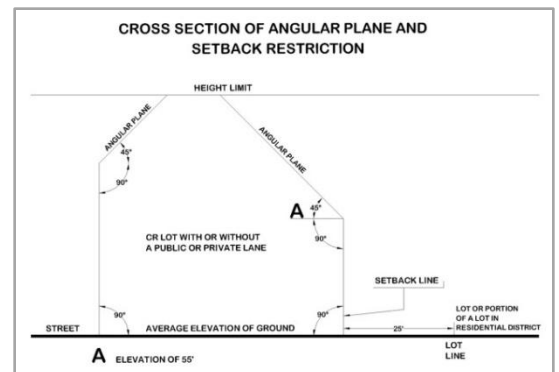


like climate change, staff is looking at incorporating measures of sustainability for energy efficiency and production, environmental conservation, connectivity, diversity, and design. We hosted four interactive public meetings as well as presented before nine civic, environmental, and business groups to test our ideas in diverse constituencies. An online survey prompted community members to weigh in on what matters most to them as the county matures.

The board will deliver its recommendations by August 1. The recommendations will feature ways to shift the focus from traffic mitigation and school capacity to looking at ways to improve quality of life in our communities. We will explore ways to encourage developers to build near transit, create connections that enable people to travel by bike or on foot, reduce carbon emissions from their buildings, generate energy on site, and take other measures to mitigate the impact of a growing population on the environment. The growth policy also will encourage ways to foster the kind of quality neighborhoods our residents want.

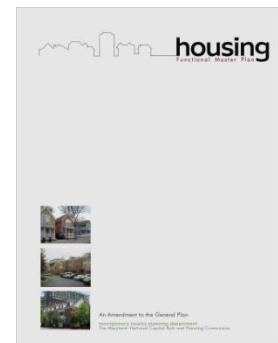
Deliver Master Plans. The board will continue worksessions on both the White Flint Sector Plan and the Gaithersburg West Master Plan and work with staff to finalize a Planning Board draft. Those will be sent to the Council in the coming months.

For the first time in recent years, master plan drafts discuss infrastructure financing. The White Flint Sector Plan includes a recommended public-private financing mechanism to address the substantial transportation-related costs associated with implementing the plan. Staff is working with the County Executive to examine potential tools for financing infrastructure, spreading costs, and delivering portions of infrastructure when needed to facilitate orderly development.

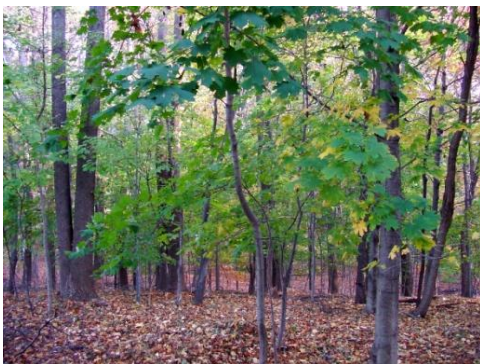


Planning staff are researching and beginning to generate preliminary recommendations for the next set of community master plans: Kensington, Takoma/Langley Crossroads and the Wheaton Central Business District.

Functional Master Plans. Planners sent the draft Housing Functional Master Plan to the board in March for an April public hearing. The plan features ways to address the need for a diversity of housing types throughout the planning agency's work, from securing more affordable housing to creating more live-work opportunities. It also explores ways to encourage environmentally sensitive design and establishes strategies to allow aging in place. Environmental planners are developing the Green Infrastructure Plan – on track to deliver to the board in April – that will designate environmental corridors considered paramount for wildlife habitat, water recharge, forest protection and the like. Planners also are drafting a water quality plan that will go to the board late this spring or summer. Finally, transportation planners will send the Purple Line Functional Master Plan amendment to the board.



Corridor Cities Transitway. Transportation planners will work with the Planning Board on a recommendation for the Corridor Cities Transitway. That recommendation, to be based on the state's environmental assessment expected to be published this spring, will specify the board's recommended mode and route. The report also will recommend I-270 value pricing improvements. This project will be similar to the Purple Line report that guided the County Council through its decision-making.



Enforcement Regulations. At the board's direction, staff is developing a comprehensive strategy for handling a backlog of violations by applicants who have not adhered to preliminary or site plan conditions or to forest conservation regulations. We are drafting amended legislation and regulations that will enable us to employ similar enforcement practices regardless of the type of violation. We plan to better train our inspectors so they understand how to document each case, gather evidence and give testimony at hearings when necessary. We also are systematically honing the list of alleged violations to determine the appropriate level and method of enforcement to pursue.

2008 Census Update. Research staff conducted the agency's 2008 Census Update Survey last summer, mailing 24,000 surveys to randomly selected households. This is the third household survey conducted this decade providing current estimates of population trends updating the federal 2000 U.S. Census data. The project garnered 12,000 responses to questions intended to tease out detailed population and household demographic data. Information will help us plan appropriate levels of service for transportation, schools, housing, social services, libraries, and parks and inform Montgomery County policy-makers as they decide where to allocate valuable resources. Staff received raw survey results in late February and expects to perform preliminary analysis by May.

parks

what we've done

In the past six months, the Department of Parks has:

Reduced Consumption. In 2008, reductions in consumption saved the Department more than \$467,000. From 2004 to 2008 the Department reduced consumption of electricity by 8%, natural gas by 16%, water and sewer by 18%, and propane by 21%. Other green management accomplishments in 2008 include: reduction in refuse of 80,000 pounds; increase in recycling by 37,000 pounds; increase in yard waste and reuse of 466,000 pounds; and expanded programs at equestrian facilities to reuse animal waste as fertilizer. In addition, the Department

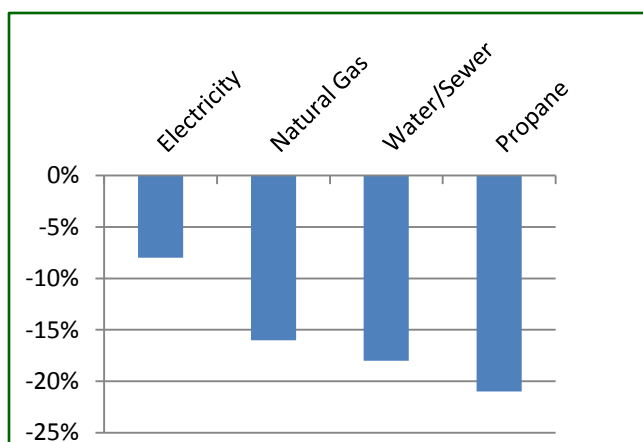


Figure 1: Percentage Reductions in Consumption

has initiated a fleet and emission reduction plan to reduce the size of the fleet, replace older vehicles with hybrids or best in class for emissions reductions, and convert a number of heavy duty vehicles to bio-diesel to decrease CO2 emissions.

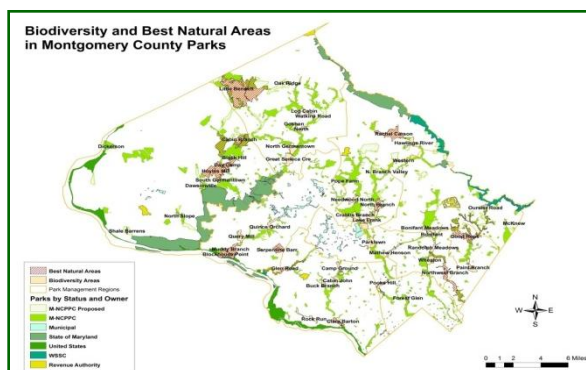
Saved Resources through Expanded Volunteer Opportunities. More than 8,000 people volunteered over 70,000 hours in parks in 2008, a value-added contribution of over \$1,375,357 or the equivalent of more than 33 work years. This represents a 12% increase over 2007. The Park Police Volunteer Program was revamped and Trail Inspection and Trail Crew Leader volunteer programs were launched. The Trail Ranger Program was expanded to 48 volunteers monitoring 80 miles of trail, and 11 trail volunteer crew leaders were recruited to lead individual maintenance projects on sanctioned trails, for a total of over 1,500 volunteer man hours this past year. A new, web-based training system has increased our capacity to recruit and prepare new volunteers.

Streamlined the Park Permit Office to Improve Customer Service. The park permits and the class and registration databases have been merged, eliminating the need for parallel server systems, facilitating cross-promotion of rentals and programs, and creating a one-stop shopping experience for customers. Permits transitioned to an online reservation system for picnic shelters, park activity buildings and campsites so customers can now reserve those facilities online 24/7 from the comfort of their home or office. The



park permits website was reorganized so it's easier for customers to find and book the facility that best suits their needs. These changes all facilitate customer "self-service" and reduce the staff and administrative time and paperwork that would otherwise be required.

Reduced Expenditures. Significant savings were achieved through implementing the retirement incentive plan, freezing non-critical positions, and narrowing our focus to the most mission-critical tasks. New spending restrictions are in place to limit purchasing to only the most essential items. Non-career staff is being utilized where appropriate by increasing the use of seasonal staff, volunteers, interns, and participating in a number of youth summer job initiatives.



Planned for Long-Term Stewardship. Park Master Plans, Trail Corridor Studies, and Park and Trail recommendations for Master Plans now have standardized processes and products, and a Vegetation Management Plan has been developed to preserve and enhance park biodiversity. A GIS-based Resource Atlas has been created to allow staff to perform first-level analysis of impacts to parks based on the presence of natural features such as wetlands, steep slopes, and erodible soils. It also

designates natural areas such as Special Protection Areas, Parks Best Natural Areas, and Biodiversity Areas, and cultural features such as historic sites with their environmental settings and archaeological sites. Training on how to use this tool has already begun to improve staff capacity to more effectively act as stewards of the land. The Parks Master Plan Schedule follows at the end of this section.

Patrolled Parks More Efficiently. Intelligence Led Policing is a new approach implemented by Park Police to deploy resources to problem areas before they become "hotspots." This is done by analyzing crime reports, calls for service, citizen input, and Park Police and employee observations to identify and target areas with the most activity. This puts more of our officers in targeted areas during targeted times. A new Rolling Roll Call has also been instituted, allowing officers to begin their shifts directly on their assigned beats instead of reporting to a designated location. This saves time, fuel and vehicle usage. Most importantly, officers are able to provide more direct patrol time within their assigned beats.

Increased Partnerships and Grants. The Department currently has 22 approved partnership projects which provide recreational facilities, programs, and services in support of the park system. The Department also has 12 new public/private partnership proposals under review ranging from the development of a new rowing facility at Black Hill Regional Park to the expansion of new indoor tennis at Cabin John Regional Park and a new baseball facility for special needs children. The Grants and Donations programs received a grand total of \$2,360,217 in FY08. Recent grants include: 1) \$36,479.05 from Homeland Security/ESRI Mobile Government grant program to fund mobile GIS equipment and software for use in urban forestry projects and an application builder software; 2) \$6,720.00 from the

Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention for training and 3) \$18,000.00 from the State Highway Administration (SHA) for Pedestrian Safety.

Enhanced the SmartParks System. All data for park activity buildings, playgrounds, hard surface trails and Enterprise buildings collected through the Infrastructure Condition Assessment project has been loaded into the system. A series of customized reports have been created to facilitate management analysis. Central Maintenance has re-engineered its business process to allow for the use of the Capital Planning Module.

where we're headed

In the coming six months, the Department of Parks will:

Leave No Child Inside. The No Child Left Inside (NCLI) initiative promotes outdoor experiences that connect children and teens to nature. Participants spend at least 75% of the program time outdoors, which also helps develop a lifelong stewardship ethic. Our natural and cultural history programs have a more cultural focus with a strong conservation ethic, and participants spend at least 50% of the program time outdoors. Currently, 80% of our natural and cultural history programs are designed for children.



Sally Ride Elementary and Little Bennett Elementary have been identified as two schools with which Parks staff will be actively working during 2009 to increase science learning opportunities in the parks, with an overall goal of incorporating park use into the science curriculum. Off-site, outdoor programs such as geo-caching, natural playgrounds, and a tree climber apprentice program will be provided by naturalists for grades K-4 and have been promoted heavily throughout the school system.

A Youth Council made up of students will be established by June 1, 2009, to assist in defining the work program and making committee assignments.

Introduce our Community Garden Program. We have received numerous inquiries from county residents supporting this program. Three parks have been selected as possible sites for 2009: Silver Spring Intermediate Park, Sligo Mill Overlook Neighborhood Park, and Red Door Store. Since two sites are in Takoma Park, staff will begin by meeting with Takoma Park officials to discuss the proposed sites and resources needed for the gardens and public outreach with a goal of having the community garden sites available by May 1, 2009. Community garden standards are being developed to evaluate present and future garden sites. Public meetings for each site will be held to receive input from neighborhoods and other interested parties. Residents will be encouraged to provide volunteer support and assist with resources, outreach and expertise. Plot fees, permitting processes, agreements, and budgets are currently under development.

Protect and Interpret our Cultural Resources. The Department of Parks has been allocated \$100,000 in federal funding for design and interpretive planning at the Josiah Henson Site (“Uncle Tom’s Cabin”). Funding will supplement County funds for preparation of 30% construction documents. Stabilization is well underway on the Seneca Stone Barn in Woodstock; this site will be open for Heritage Days in June. The Woodlawn Barn RFP for the Quaker/UGRR Visitors Center will be advertised shortly. The Darby Store stabilization drawings are nearly complete; construction is anticipated for fall 2009. The Zeigler Log House in Little Bennett is restored to its 1823 log cabin and will open to the public summer/fall 2009. The project to put a public use in the Brainard Warner House has commenced.



Figure 2: Renovations to Seneca Stone Barn

Improve coordination with the Department of Recreation. The Director of Parks and the Director of Recreation met shortly after the PHED Committee work session on March 9, 2009, to develop an action plan to immediately address issues related to customer confusion and program overlap. Interagency teams are being formed to identify the best approach to coordinate program offerings, provide integrated registration, collaborate on special events and marketing efforts, and update the 2004 MOU. The kick-off program coordination meeting will take place in March or April, and Parks staff is already exploring alternatives that would allow seamless registration for all programs.

Manage the Return of the Sligo Creek Golf Course. The Sligo Creek Golf Course is slated to return to the Department of Parks as of October 1, 2009. Upon return of this property from the Montgomery County Revenue Authority, the Department will provide interim security and maintenance care for the 65-acre park site. A Park Master Plan Study will be conducted to determine the best use of the property. This process will include community outreach, public input, and a public hearing. Once the study is completed, it will be presented to the Commission for adoption.

Relocate the Parks’ Central Maintenance Facility. The Department of Parks is planning for the relocation of its Central Maintenance Facility at Shady Grove in concert with the Executive’s Smart Growth Initiative to implement the Shady Grove Master Plan. Several sites for the relocated facility have been identified and are under evaluation. The current maintenance facility was opened in 1981 and includes 65,000 square feet of building space along with storage areas for materials and equipment on a 12-acre site. As the parks system has grown considerably since the 80’s, the new facility will require a 15- to 20-acre site. Once a site is identified and acquired, the design process will commence.

Participate in the Federal Stimulus Funding/American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Commission is a member of the County Executive’s Federal Stimulus Steering Committee. This group has been charged with identifying any County prospects that would benefit from the federal economic recovery program. The Department of Parks has identified several “shovel-ready” projects that appear to fit particular aspects of the program and will apply for competitive grants as opportunities arise. The

Department has already applied for two projects through the Maryland Department of Environment for water quality infrastructure improvements.

status of CIP projects

The status of development projects is listed in the chart following this section. More information on this program and related projects can be found at www.ParkProjects.org. The below are additions to the park system through land acquisitions:

- 32.0 acres added to Black Hill Regional Park
- 3.0 acres added to Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park
- 1.7 acres added to Darnestown Local Park
- 9.7 acres as an initial acquisition for Piedmont Crossing Local Park
- 11.0 acres added to Paint Branch Stream Valley, Unit 4
- 5.6 acres added to Tilden Woods Stream Valley Park
- 5.7 acres donated as the “Stadtman Preserve” at Rock Creek Regional Park

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Staff					

Plan

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MAJOR CIP PROJECTS as of March 2009

Project	Facility Planning		Design			Bid Process		Construction	
	Start	Complete	50%	75%	100%	Start	Complete	50%	100%
Artificial turf fields @ Fairland Rec Park and Montgomery Blair High School									
Broadacres Local Park Renovation									
Cabin John Dog Exercise Area									
Five Local Park Playgrounds									
Hoyles Mill Rd Stream Restoration & bridge installation									
Kemp Mill Urban Park Renovation									
King Dairy Barn Museum									
Martin Luther King, Jr. Rec Park access road resurfacing									
Matthew Henson Hiker-Biker Trail									
Meadowbrook Stormwater Mgmt Outfall Extension									
Olney Manor Rec Park ballfield & tennis lights									
Rock Creek Pedestrian Bridge									
Seneca Crossing Local Park Development									
Silver Place									
Wheaton Reg Pk Adventure Playground & 11 local parks renovation									
Wheaton Indoor Tennis Bubble									
Wisconsin Place Community Recreation Center									
Woodstock Equestrian Park Phase II including outdoor riding									

STATUS AS OF SPRING 2009

PROJECTS BY OTHERS

Project	Technical Review		Park Permits		Construction	
	Start	Complete	Start	Complete	50%	100%
Clarksburg Village Phase I Local Park						
Dowden's Ordinary Special Park						
Elm Street Urban Park						
Long Branch Pedestrian Bridge						
Olney Manor Rec Park Dog Exercise Area						
Silver Spring Transit Center Urban Parks						



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www.MontgomeryPlanning.org | www.MontgomeryParks.org