

spring 2010

# Semi Annual

REPORT





President Floreen and Members of the County Council:

This will be the last semi-annual report of the Planning Board under my chairmanship. Thank you for a second opportunity to serve a county I love.

I trust that you find the Commission in better shape than four years ago. Our planning and parks departments are led by talented and innovative directors. Both departments have been reorganized to strengthen coordination and efficiency. And productivity in both departments has increased even as resources have shrunk. Overall, we have achieved most, if not all, of the goals the Council set for the agency when I was re-appointed.



### **In Planning:**

Over the past four years, the Council approved Planning Board proposals that laid a foundation for a more economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable future. Taken together, the master plans, growth policy, and revision of the zoning ordinance represent a transformation in the county's planning policies. As our emphasis shifts from developing large suburban tracts to conserving and enhancing our communities, we have focused on redeveloping strategically located auto-oriented commercial strips into transit-oriented, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly centers. Guidelines to help implement plans will encourage better design with lower environmental and energy impacts, produce a more coherent pattern of development, and foster a more inviting and functional public realm.

We've made significant changes in the regulatory system. For the first time, a Development Review Manual codifies the requirements for project approval; measures to reduce the time and costs of project review and regularize the roles of the many agencies that participate in the process will soon be in place. With Council approval of clear and consistent enforcement measures, the Board can act consistently and expeditiously on forest conservation, site plan, and subdivision violations. Clarification of how the Forest Conservation Law applies to different classes of applicants remains to be enacted, along with approval of amendments to bring the county law into conformance with recently enacted state law.

We've made great progress on reaching out to our constituencies -- and building new ones. We livestream all Planning Board meetings and highlight decisions and initiatives on our cable shows. We encourage feedback through online comment boards, blogs and email links on our web pages. We publish a weekly e-newsletter and encourage feedback as we increase our visibility throughout the county during director walkabouts and planner office hours.

Yet, much remains to be done. In light of the economic conditions, this report highlights the effects of the County Executive's 2011 budget recommendations on the master plan schedule. (see p. 14) Whatever level of funding the Council provides, we must use our resources strategically to craft plans

for areas with the highest potential of fostering sustainable growth and driving economic recovery . High priority should be placed on a new plan to guide development for an eastern life science complex. Planning for that area must resolve major transportation issues and be coordinated with significant scientific assets in Prince George’s County. The Planning Board Draft Sector Plan for Takoma-Langley Crossroads is complete. It, and a new plan for Wheaton, will be ready for Council action early next year. We also expect to conclude work on the Kensington Sector Plan this year. We are preparing a sector plan for Long Branch; plans for other Purple Line station areas need to be prepared as soon as feasible.

While we are looking at our work plan, we cannot lose sight of measures that are urgently needed to ensure the integrity of the Agricultural Reserve, not only protecting it as a major agricultural and environmental resource, but also reducing pressure for residential development that fragments the critical mass of farmland and intensifies demands for costly infrastructure and services. In Clarksburg, an amendment to the master plan will be needed to address environmental issues in the Ten Mile Creek watershed.

In the next six months the Planning Board will act on:

- CR Zone Guidelines
- Planning Board Draft of the Takoma-Langley Sector Plan
- Kensington Sectional Map Amendment
- Water Resources Functional Master Plan
- Design Guidelines for Twinbrook, Germantown Employment Area, White Flint, and Kensington (if SMA is adopted)
- Wheaton Business District Sector Plan

Council action will be needed on:

- Germantown and White Flint SMAs
- Establishment of the funding mechanism for White Flint infrastructure
- Revised LSC Zone
- Gaithersburg West Sector Plan and SMA
- Kensington Sector Plan and SMA
- Revisions to conform the county Forest Conservation Law to new state requirements
- Amendments to the RDT Zone to clarify regulations for child lots, non-agricultural subdivisions, and agricultural subdivisions in the Agricultural Reserve



## **In Parks:**

Our award-winning park system is a major reason why people choose to live and work in Montgomery County. The 2009 County Resident Survey reported that nine of 10 respondents said they visited a park in the past 12 months and ranked parks as “good” or “excellent.” It is clear county residents cherish our parks.

Major changes have occurred in park management over the past four years. The department has been reorganized under new leadership. We instituted program budgeting to strengthen performance of core functions and control costs. Facilities have been evaluated to prioritize maintenance, rehabilitation, or replacement, and we developed a system to reduce energy costs. SmartParks has facilitated more efficient management of facilities. The department has initiated community gardens, a program so popular that dozens of residents are on waiting lists to participate. Volunteer hours have increased, adding invaluable resources to the care of natural areas and public gardens. We initiated an urban parks program to help us realize new sector plans and help “green” high density areas of the county.

The Commission’s indoor tennis facilities at Cabin John and Wheaton Regional Parks have been rehabilitated and the Enterprise Division has made programmatic and management changes to bring its finances into the black for FY 2011. The Montgomery Parks Foundation is being reconstituted to attract private donations for unique park facilities and supplement public funding. Close cooperation with the County Recreation Department has resulted in better service to common and overlapping constituencies. The two departments are collaborating on Vision 2030--a new long-term plan for parks and recreation. The accomplishments of our Parks staff are impressive, considering these achievements were realized in spite of consecutive years of significant staff vacancies and budget reductions.

The county’s fiscal crisis raises critical issues for the park system. During the last decade, we have added more than 4,000 acres and over 60 parks with a 13% increase in facilities. Staff levels today are only 1.3 percent above 2000 levels and the Metropolitan District Tax (which supports the park system) has been reduced by almost 22 percent since 2006. Cumulatively, these tax rate reductions represent \$54 million of lost revenue generation capacity. Exclusion of municipal residents from the part of the park tax that supports regional, recreational and stream valley parks exacerbates the problem by approximately \$2-3 million a year. These short-term budget decisions are producing a long-term structural deficit for the park fund: a growing demand for more and better facilities and services for a changing population on the one hand and aging facilities on the other, which generates a growing maintenance and replacement backlog.

The Department of Parks will continue to seek cost cutting and revenue enhancement alternatives. But it seems unlikely that even the most extreme of these measures will meet the mid-to-long term need for reinvestment in facilities and need to return to an appropriate level of maintenance for an expanded system. The coming six months will, depending on the funding level ultimately approved, test public tolerance of lower levels of park maintenance and service and increased user fees.

The Board and the Department are committed to continuous improvement of management, efficient use of available resources, and adoption of policies that increase productivity of facilities and improve the quality of experience for park users because well-maintained and managed parks:

- stimulate the economy and support property values
- promote healthy living, which helps decrease health care costs
- protect the natural environment, preserving clean water and clean air
- provide educational and recreational opportunities for families

### **In Bi-County Offices:**

With the support of Prince George's County Planning Board Chairman Sam Parker and Executive Director Patti Barney, important changes are underway to improve the services provided by the Commission's bi-county offices. Human resources, purchasing, and IT services are being reoriented to distinguish core services that should be handled by central management from those that should be outsourced or provided by departments. The budget for Central Administrative Services has converted to a program format. With assistance from Public Technology, Inc., a new governance model for information technology is being established that will result in more efficient operation and lower long-term costs for core functions. The recent CAS study led by staff from the two County Councils has been helpful in identifying areas for improvement and confirming measures the Commission has underway to improve its performance.

### **Conclusion**

In my final months as chairman, my Board colleagues and staff pledge to work together – and with the Council – to meet the unprecedented budget challenges confronting the county. We shall strive to maintain core services. At the same time, it is important to retain our greatest asset – staff – to ensure that as the economy improves, we are positioned to help the county take advantage of the turnaround.

Respectfully submitted,



Royce Hanson  
Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board

## planning

### budget implications

After receiving the County Executive's recommended budget reduction of 15.4% below FY10, the Planning Department has responded by re-evaluating its work program to accommodate those cuts. We identified reductions and the resulting impacts. Those reductions encompassed operating expenses and compensation – including a 10-day furlough – as well as cuts to programs. We propose deferring the following in FY11:

Green Infrastructure Functional Plan  
Master Plan of Highways Update  
White Flint II

Glenmont Sector Plan  
Battery Lane Sector Plan  
Bikeways Implementation

Further, we propose to reduce or slow down work on the following programs:

Information Services

Research

Website

Work program management

Water Resources

Work program support

Master Plan for Historic Preservation

Growth Policy

Chevy Chase Lake

Special Exceptions

Mandatory Referrals

Preliminary Plans/Subdivision Plans

Environmental Review/Forest Conservation/

Project/Site Plans

Inspections and Enforcement

Washington Adventist Hospital/Columbia Union College

After the PHED committee's April 12 budget work session, we are preparing changes to the above list, such as further reducing or eliminating work on the Washington Adventist Hospital project and moving the Route 29 Corridor Study from FY12 to FY11. In light of the prospect of worsening economic conditions, we anticipate continuing discussion with the PHED and Council to accomplish your priorities.

### what we've done

With fiscal sustainability as our main goal, our master plans, such as White Flint and Gaithersburg West, set the stage for strategic jobs and housing growth that will, over time, help create a sustainable tax base in the County. Combined with Departmental restructuring, streamlining our development review process and automation of application processing, we are facilitating economic development through a one-two punch of visionary planning and a more efficient application process.

Over the past six months, staff throughout the Planning Department has worked with the Council to advance seven master plans. We have made great strides on the zoning rewrite project, launched several new outreach initiatives, and made progress on several ongoing projects. This workload is unprecedented.

Advancing such work during a downturn positions the county to react quickly when things turn around. Our collaborative work will enhance the social and economic health of the community by ensuring we grow efficiently, generating the resources necessary to protect quality of place for existing residents. When we draw new people into the community, the added density will be more sustainable than our past growth trends, which have proven fiscally challenging.

## **MASTER PLANNING**

The hard work of the Council, particularly the PHED committee, has helped move forward several important plans.

- The White Flint Plan, now adopted, is arguably the most important master plan in decades. It has the most potential for increasing the tax base in a way that is sustainable for the long term. Property owners already are working on plans to help transform the area.
- The Life Sciences concept in the Gaithersburg West Plan offers potential to secure the county's future as a biotech industry leader. We will continue to help bring the plan to a successful conclusion this spring.
- The Kensington Sector Plan is moving through the Council review process, soon to be followed by the Wheaton CBD Plan. Both will bring a new vibrancy to downtowns.
- Three Purple Line station area plans are moving ahead:
  - the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Plan
  - the Long Branch Sector Plan, which encompasses two future Purple Line stations
  - the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan



In addition, staff has made progress on the following plans:

- the Water Resources Functional Plan, which examines drinking water, wastewater treatment capacity and regulatory requirements
- amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation recommended several sites and areas for designation
- a staff draft of a comprehensive amendment for the Upper Patuxent area, including two historic districts and several individual resources
- Design guidelines for the Germantown, Twinbrook, White Flint, Gaithersburg, Kensington, and Takoma Park areas
- The Purple Line Functional Master Plan, which sets guidelines for the alignment and station locations.



## **DEVELOPMENT REVIEW**

As we developed a streamlined project application process, we engaged the public several times to solicit feedback. The goal: to minimize repetition in processes and reviews, streamlining the review time required while guaranteeing citizen engagement and prompting more timely input from other agencies. A big step in expediting project reviews will be the newly purchased Project Dox review system, an electronic sharing/filing system that not only expedites project review, but also creates huge efficiencies for both internal and external reviewers. We also worked with Executive agencies and utilities to redesign the lead agency process. The final report establishes who has lead agency authority on the many regulatory issues during plan review, establishes a process for resolving conflicts, and sets forth timeframes.

The new process should result in the more timely review of plans.

### **Project Dox**

This software facilitates plan submission by comparing previous versions for changes, and filing comments typed directly onto pages, allowing electronic transmission and tracking for all reviewers. Participants receive electronic submissions, comment online, and receive warnings about impending deadlines. We absorbed the cost of Project Dox and expect the program to benefit all of the participating agencies, whom we expect to train over the next few months.

### **Regulatory Caseload**

In the past six months, planning staff and the legal department have prepared and submitted 66 resolutions for Board adoption. On average, reviews have dipped to four months from receipt of an application to Board decision, and resolutions are adopted within two to three weeks of Board action.

No work is more important (and perhaps more tedious) than zoning review. Across the nation, the landscape is littered with abandoned zoning rewrite efforts. We have made great strides in advancing the effort for a new zoning ordinance, including:

- creating electronic base maps for all 640 zoning maps, opening up a whole new world of data layers and information-sharing between departments and the public.
- releasing our consultant's report, drafted under staff direction, of the project approach and outline, setting the stage for drafting the new code over the next year.



*Participants in a public listening session for the zoning code rewrite project*

Working with the Council, planners prepared the Commercial Residential Zone for adoption. The zone encourages a mix of commercial and residential uses at varying densities and will allow better predictability of allowed use, density and height; more integrated services, residential opportunities, and public amenities; and more sustainable growth.

Plan type	Received	Brought to Board
	10/1/09– 3/15/10	10/1/09– 3/15/10
Preliminary	27	34
Project	6	3
Site	51	23
Forest conservation	32	29
Mandatory referrals	32	23

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Much of our work fulfills goals specified in our plans and ensures we comply with regulatory requirements. In the last six months, we have:

- initiated forest conservation and site plan violation hearings for landowners who have run afoul of plan conditions, holding six hearings in the last six months. The legislation to shore up the Planning Board’s ability to enforce such violations is now under review by the County Council (see table, p. 9).
- completed 74 Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) reviews
- implemented forest conservation revisions in response to changes in the Forest Conservation Law
- worked with DEP to prepare the annual report on the Climate Protection Plan
- participated in the Clarksburg Water Quality Working Group
- worked with HHS to incorporate community health concerns into our land-use decision-making
- worked with the BRAC Implementation Committee on community outreach and review
- updated and published Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) guidelines



*Planners worked with county staff to develop strategies to incorporate community health concerns into plans.*

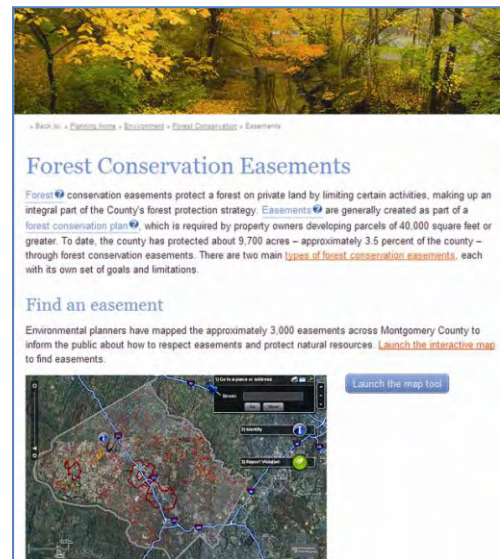
Site Plan Name	Civil Penalty	Distribution of Funds
Clarksburg Town Center	\$22,000	DR Special Revenue Fund
Singh (Holly Hill)	\$4,000	DR Special Revenue Fund
Highlands at Clarksburg	\$150,000 (subject to reduction based on remedial action)	Not applicable until final penalty amount is set
Montrose Parks	\$4,000	DR Special Revenue Fund
Middlebrook Industrial Park, Lot 1&2	\$500	General Funds
Portico	\$32,000	DR Special Revenue Fund
East Village	\$500/day	Admin. Fund
Germantown Professional Building	\$37,000	Admin. Fund
Clarksburg Village Phase I	\$150,000	Admin. Fund (\$50,000 to HOA)
Maple Ridge	\$276,750	Admin. Fund (\$207,500 to HOA)
The Enclave	\$2,500	Admin. Fund

## INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Over the last several months, staff has improved our ability to track economic trends and combine them with demographic data to help guide decision-making. We are releasing our first summary of economic and demographic trends by Council district that will establish benchmarks for County indicators.

In support of both Departments, as well as other agencies, the Research and Information System Team:

- publicized the importance and location of forest conservation easements on a web page featuring an easement locator tool, information about the importance of easements, a meet-the-forest-inspector video and a link to report violations
- implemented web-based tools to enhance access to electronic data
- completed key tasks as part of the county GIS Strategic Plan
- continued work on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Employment, Housing, and Population forecasts
- created a process to generate social and economic indicators by Council district and countywide; worked with DED to secure business and employment data to better gauge economic trends.



*Our forest conservation easement page featuring a locator tool was visited more than 6,200 times*

## COLLABORATION & OUTREACH

In the last six months, we explored ways to better engage the community on planning issues, and we realized some real successes. Among the many activities where we improved interactions with the public.

- The planning director invited neighborhood groups to request walking tours to begin a conversation about what matters to them, furthering staff's education about important issues countywide. Although hampered by snowy weather, the director participated in several walkabouts, with more scheduled.
- Expanded Spanish-language outreach efforts for the Long Branch Sector Plan community meetings. While costly, translation and interpretation services remain necessary to engage all residents.
- To help draw new audiences and simplify planning concepts, we produced informational videos such as an in-depth look at diversity and its implications for countywide planning, a commute comparison for the Zoning Rewrite website, a day in the life of a forest conservation inspector, and a light-hearted look at streamlining the development review process.
- Public meetings enabled staff to respond to community and County Council requests in preparation for project review in the Sandy Spring Village area.
- We launched a Planning Department Facebook page.



*A recent Montgomery Plans focused on what the approved and adopted Twinbrook plan will bring to the area*

- We created The Straight Line blog to engage new participants in a dialogue on improving the built environment and provide a new forum for comment on development applications. To date, we have received more than 100 comments.
- To explain what we do in engaging sound bites, we produced more episodes of cable programs Montgomery Plans and Growing Right, in collaboration with County Cable Montgomery. The Montgomery Plans episode about how to get involved in planning won a "gold" award in the international Ava competition.
- Collected online the images submitted for the Day in the Life of Kensington photo contest.



## where we're headed

The significant budget reductions expected of all County agencies will drive changes to the Planning Department's work program. Our leadership will remain strategic in delivering projects that support economic development, applying a flexible team approach that can shift focus quickly as the need arises, as well as continue expediting required functions, such as development review.

Despite the poor economic news, staff productivity is as high as it's ever been. Staff is prepared to continue or launch the following projects.

### **MASTER PLANNING**

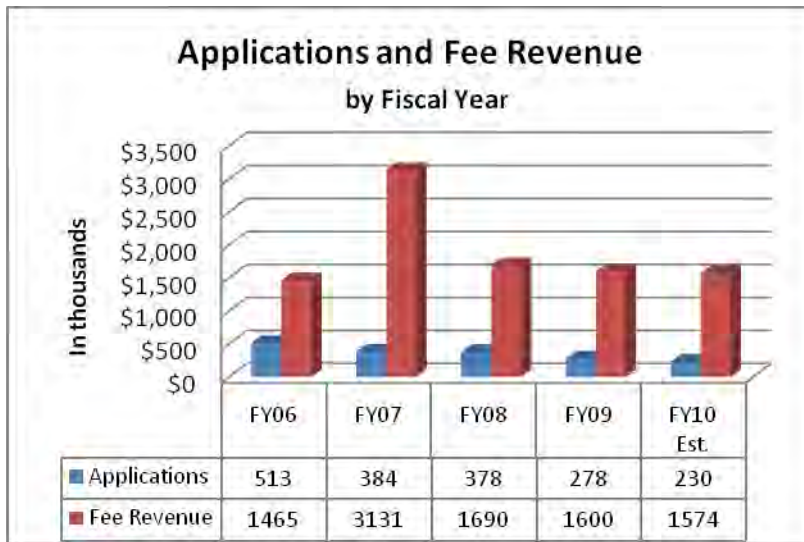
- The Planning Board will review a scope of work for the Chevy Chase Lake Purple Line station area this spring.
- Planners will continue their research, partly through a series of community meetings, to inform the Long Branch Sector Plan and begin writing recommendations.
- Staff will complete a draft of the Green Space Guidelines for downtown Silver Spring.
- The Upper Patuxent Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation will be transmitted to the Council.
- Urban designers will continue to prepare guidelines for the Germantown, Twinbrook, White Flint, Gaithersburg, and Kensington areas and begin draft guidelines for the Takoma Park and Wheaton areas.
- Staff will prepare guidelines for the Sandy Spring Village area as required in the master plan, including a community charrette.
- Sectional Map Amendments for Kensington and Gaithersburg West will be filed soon after the Council approves the master plans, on track to meet the Council goal of approving SMAs by the end of October.
- The Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan will be transmitted to the County Council and Executive in late summer. The new Council will consider the Plan.
- Staff will finalize the draft Wheaton CBD Plan and send it for Planning Board consideration.
- Staff will initiate new neighborhood planning efforts for the Washington Adventist Hospital site in Takoma Park, and for Battery Lane and Burtonsville, if resources are allocated in the FY11 budget. Each of these efforts will involve collaboration with the relevant community and agencies.
- Planners will begin work on the Route 29 mobility and land use plan if Council allocates resources in the Department's work plan. Staff will prepare a project scope of work if the project is accelerated in the work program. While its primary focus will be the Cherry Hill Employment Area (Percontee, Washington Adventist Hospital, County Site 2, FDA), mobility must be addressed over a broader area.
- The Clarksburg water quality work group report in February has not yet been released. The Planning Board requested a master plan amendment that would feature environmental site design and new housing types to protect the sensitive watershed. The current work program does not support such an effort.



*Georgia Avenue, Wheaton*



## **IMPLEMENTATION**



*The fee revenue stream, volatile from month to month, has experienced a significant downward trend in the past three years*

**Zoning Rewrite.** Staff will continue to hone the draft approach document, in concert with policy-makers and members of the public. All can have their say at open houses scheduled in April that will provide more information about key elements of the rewrite.

**Growth Policy.** The Planning Board has sent the Council recommendations to reinforce, rather than abandon, the county's focus on sustainable communities. The Planning Board expects the initiative to shift from a biennial to quadrennial review of APF, and our budget request reflects that revision. Also:

- Based on budget constraints, we do not plan any new traffic data collection or analysis of Local Area Transportation Review during FY 11. However, we expect to continue discussions on potential replacements for PAMR based on the Executive Branch study results and develop improved modeling techniques for mobile-source greenhouse gas emissions, per our grant from EPA.
- We will conduct the proposed retail trip generation study using consultant resources provided through the MWCOC Transportation/Land Use Connections program.

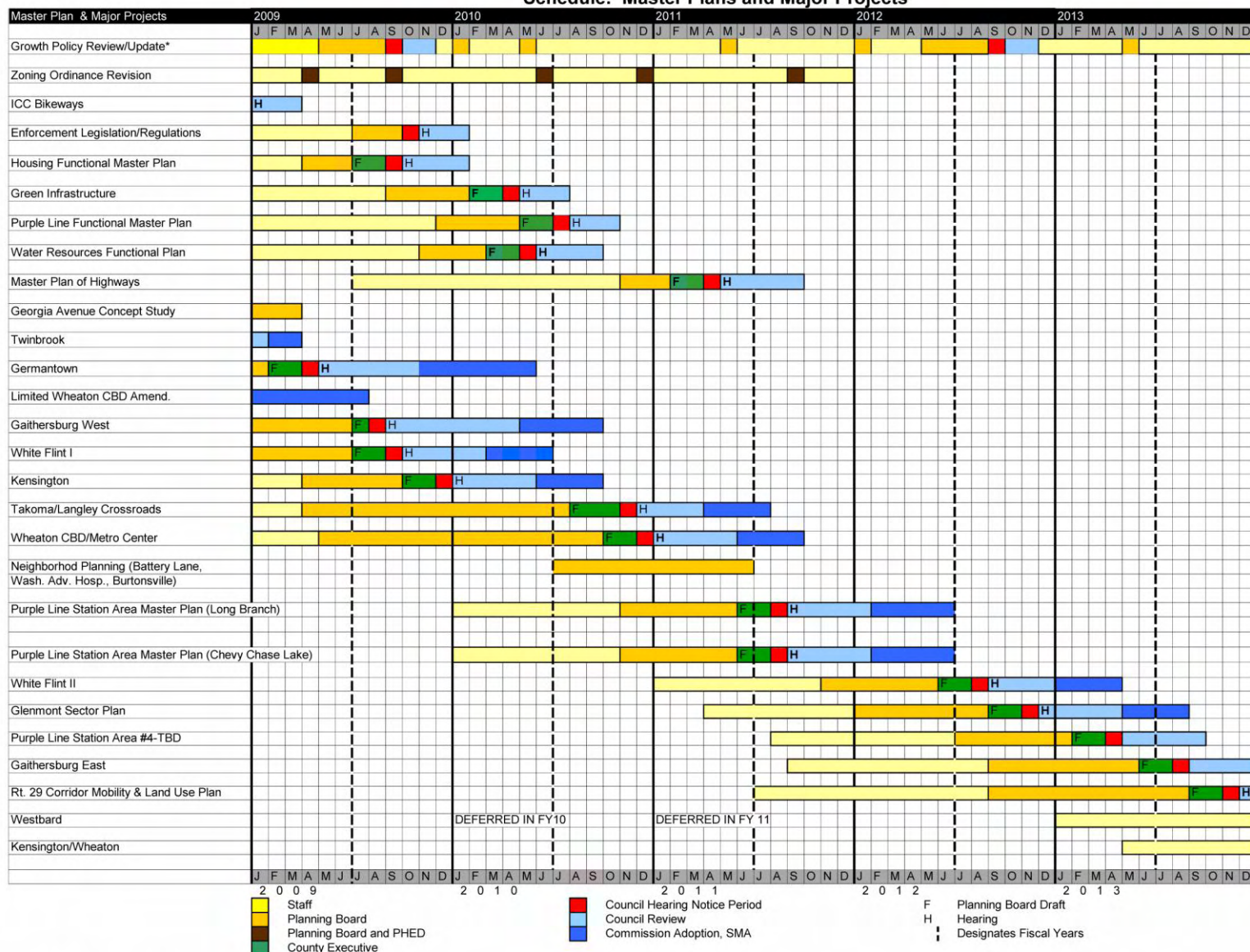
**Master Plan of Highways.** Planners are reviewing the county's Master Plan of Highways, which classifies Montgomery County roads. This is the first comprehensive update to the transportation network plan since 1955.

## **INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

- Continue to foster better access to GIS across divisions, between agencies, and with the public and expand tools that allow staff to use web-based GIS for planning analysis.
- Develop models to support development of small-area forecasting that provide better frameworks for understanding the pace, pattern and sustainability of county growth.
- Develop data models that standardize access to information from the Census Update Survey, small area employment and land use datasets, and other agency demographics.
- Complete migration to the Hansen 8 web-based system for application tracking and update other parts of the agency's land use monitoring system to work seamlessly with Hansen 8.



### Schedule: Master Plans and Major Projects

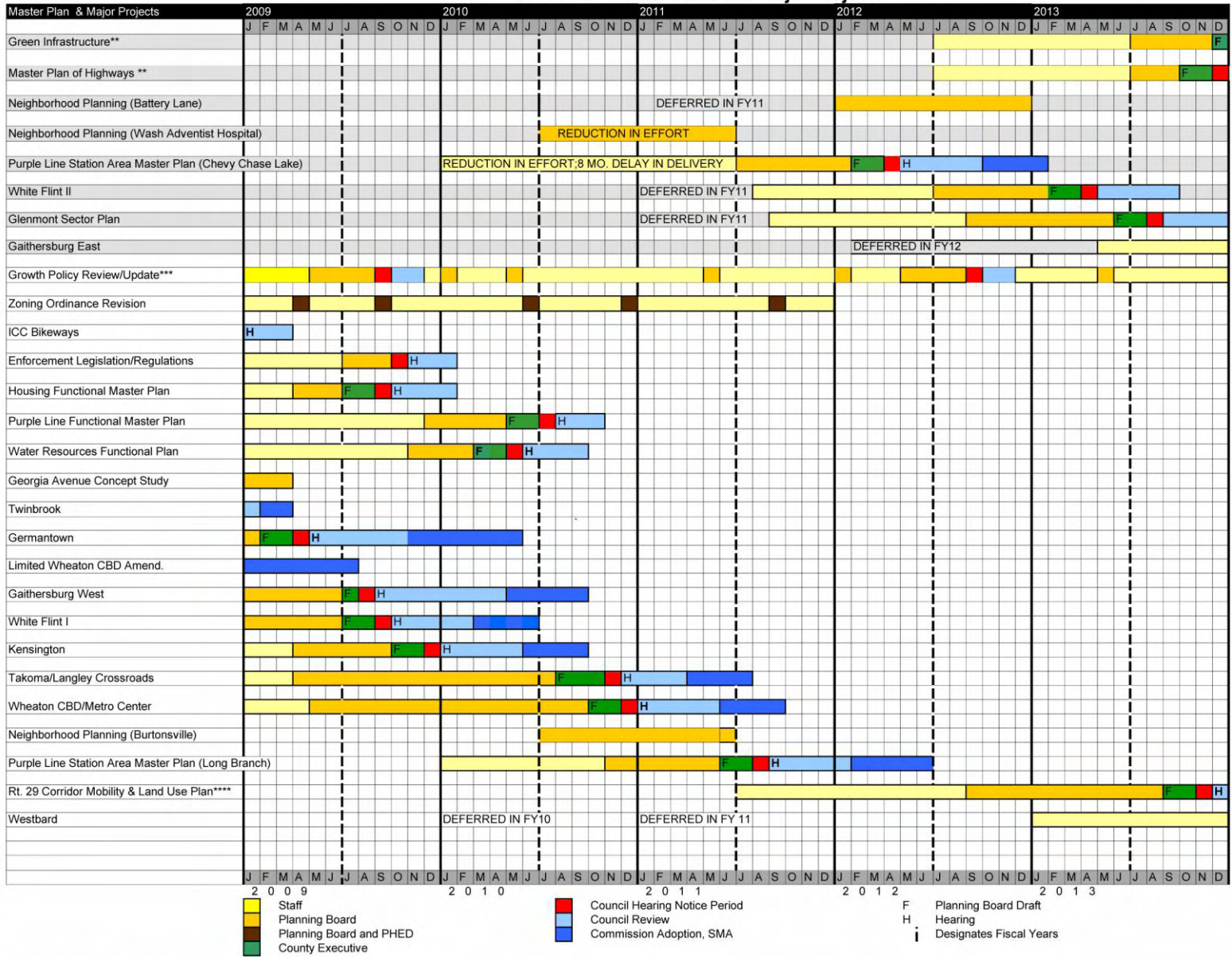


\* Growth Policy assumed to be on a quadrennial cycle for APFO standards.



# Work Program Impact of Cuts Proposed by County Executive \*

## Schedule: Master Plans and Major Projects



\* The deferral of several plans has pushed the proposed plans for Purple Line Station #4 and Kensington/Wheaton off the chart entirely.  
 \*\*Presumes staff levels restored in FY13  
 \*\*\* Growth Policy assumed to be on a quadrennial cycle for APFO standards.  
 \*\*\*\*Presumes consulting service funding in FY12

## parks

### what we've done

#### IMPLEMENTED DATA-DRIVEN EFFICIENCIES IN OPERATIONS

The systematic collection of labor data and costs of supplies and materials through the SmartParks system has enabled managers to make more informed decisions about the most strategic use of staff and resources to meet existing needs. As budget dollars continue to get tighter, the ability to determine how resources can be adjusted to maximize productivity and cover core services is critical. Park maintenance employees have been re-aligned to focus on core parks functions, and analysis of usage data has resulted in the closing of several under-utilized park activity buildings, saving energy, personnel and building maintenance costs. SmartParks data allowed us to calculate in detail the cost of the snow events and justify the request for FEMA reimbursement. The Department's energy management program has realized savings of \$507,321 in utilities for 2009. Operation and Use Guidelines and Plans are being developed in key areas to optimize management. Significant fleet management efficiency measures are underway, including the new Shady Grove Fueling site that provides fuel usage data.



Vehicles that have been identified as underutilized will be reassigned or divested. The Park Police's new Computer Aided Dispatch system automatically generates patrol calls to ensure responsiveness to citizen concerns and creates an audit trail of the patrols for problem areas.

#### WORKING GREENER

Montgomery Parks continues to implement a range of innovative approaches to support our core mission and "keep it green." In the past six months we have:

- Launched the Green Waste Recycling and Composting Program. Compost and mulch produced onsite will reduce costs of purchasing soil amendments for ballfield renovations, tree planting and other improvements.
- Submitted two projects for the Sustainable Sites Initiative - facility planning for Kemp Mill Urban Park, and design and construction for Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park.
- Started incorporating Environmental Site Design (ESD) concepts into ongoing projects and Facility Plans as required by regulations that will become effective in May 2010.



- Trained park maintenance staff on the care of environmentally sensitive areas, storm water maintenance, minor construction guidelines, and sustainable landscaping.
- Completed Waste Storage Facilities at Wheaton Stables and Callithea Farm and a Heavy Use Area at Wheaton Stables in partnership with the Maryland Department of Agriculture/Soil Conservation District. These facilities will protect water quality by preventing seepage into nearby streams as well as erosion of and runoff from grazing fields and pastures.
- Continued to reduce our energy costs in spite of rising prices with a successful, targeted energy management program.

## **EXPANDED COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND PARTNERS**

Montgomery Parks is currently collaborating with a wide range of State, Regional and County agencies, including:

- SHA, to monitor ICC construction activities, including several Environmental Stewardship/Compensatory Mitigation projects, to ensure parkland is not adversely impacted. One of these mitigation projects is the largest stream restoration project in Maryland.
- MCDEP, on an interagency stormwater management maintenance working group that has been established to help coordinate non-structural maintenance with region staff.
- Planning Department on new Sector Plans - White Flint, Takoma Langley, Kensington, and Gaithersburg West - to develop complete and integrated park, trail and open space systems best



- suited to meet the needs of future populations in mixed use, compact communities.
- Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, to establish an MOU to provide residents with customized Parks ALERT notifications through the existing Alert Montgomery system.
- Community Use of Public Facilities and MCPS staff, to resolve issues relating to athletic field permitting, use and maintenance. Parks has taken the lead on hosting regular quarterly meetings to discuss these issues and develop coordinated solutions.
- MCRD on the Joint Recreation and Parks Program Committee, created as a result of the County Council's Park and Recreation Program Study. They meet bi-monthly to coordinate activities and avoid program duplication, ensure consistency for cost recovery and pricing, and maximize collaboration.

## **ENGAGED THE COMMUNITY**

Montgomery Parks continues to work interactively and in coordination with residents on a variety of different projects, including:

- The popular Community Gardens program completed its first year at Sligo Overlook Park and has a waiting list of 36



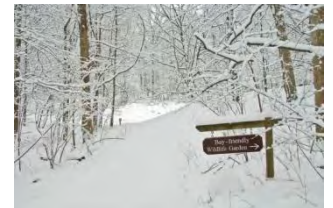


gardeners anxious to join. In response to resident requests, an additional 120 plots are being prepared at the Briggs Chaney Community Garden and should be available by April 1.

- Montgomery Parks and the Department of Recreation are partnering on the Vision2030 project to develop a strategic plan to map County recreation assets and use this community investment for the most efficient delivery of parks and recreation needs and promote ongoing community involvement. This project will solicit input from residents, community leaders, and decision-makers.
- Park Police have reintroduced ParkWatch, their community-based training program, to teach general observation and park safety skills to citizens, employees and volunteers.
- Park staff has generated strong community participation in planning Peachwood park improvements related to the ICC project through the internet, community surveys, and meetings with community members and leaders.

## **IMPROVED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

In partnership with the University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security, Montgomery Parks completed a Continuity of Operations Plan to manage essential functions in case of an emergency, including protecting vital equipment, records, and other assets; reducing disruptions to operations; reducing loss of life, minimizing damage and losses; and achieving a timely and orderly resumption of ordinary operations. And during the recent snow storms of historic proportions, we reduced the staffing necessary by concentrating exclusively on the Parkways, safety access and public roads, and addressing the other park areas during normal business hours. This avoided many hours of premium pay, though it did take substantially longer to finish clearing many park areas. The establishment of the Parks ALERT system (which utilizes the Alert Montgomery system through a MOU with the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security) enabled Parks to immediately notify residents and staff of park and facility closures as they occurred.



where we're headed

## **IMPROVING DATA-DRIVEN EFFICIENCIES IN OPERATIONS**

- Parks staff recently created a digital *Resource Atlas* comprised of GIS-based maps to clearly identify our system's sensitive areas, biodiversity areas and best natural areas. This tool will be used to educate staff and park users on how best to achieve the appropriate balance between recreation and conservation and highlights the best examples of environmentally sensitive areas management in our county parks.

- Staff has begun to track descriptions, amenity values, land acreage and value, project numbers, approval dates and internal planning information for all Planning Board-approved dedicated parkland and park amenities to improve how these assets are managed.
- Existing data is being used to develop a comprehensive Preventive Maintenance Program for paved areas such as parking lots, interior park roadways and paved paths, storm drains, ADA needs, and asbestos, lead and mold remediation plans.
- The new automated Meadowbrook Fueling site will open in April and the Saddlebrook Fuel Site will be upgraded with an above-ground storage tank, new dispensers and a state of the art Fuel-Master computer system for data collection and security.



### **WORKING GREENER**

- Expanding the Green Waste Recycling and Composting Program to include Northwest Branch Park, Wheaton Regional Park, South Germantown Recreational Park, and Pope Farm. Projected savings of \$52,500 annually.
- Introducing an E-Procurement solution will reduce paper usage and increase efficiency, allowing contractors to bid electronically on CIP Projects and create an electronic workflow for easy routing of procurement files.
- Mapping all existing storm drains and stormwater management facilities, that will identify sites for retrofits, capture and input all green infrastructure improvements into GIS for tracking and future maintenance, and develop a commissioning process for operation and maintenance.
- Brookside Gardens will be developing a website promoting green practices for home, work and garden, which will highlight green initiatives at Brookside Gardens and link interested residents to other resources.

### **EXPANDING COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND PARTNERS**

- Creating a Miracle League Baseball facility at South Germantown Recreational Park to provide opportunities for children with disabilities to play baseball.
- Partnering with the Go Ape Adventure Company to provide a safe and fun outdoor rope climbing and obstacle course adventure for “kids” of all ages at Rock Creek Regional Park, building confidence and physical fitness.
- Working with the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to expand the Park ALERT for use as an internal employee notification system.
- Parks staff continued to work closely with the County on the move of the Central Maintenance Facility from Shady Grove to the Webb Tract as part of the Executive’s Smart Growth Initiative.
- Park Police is working with County Police to collaborate on an improved joint dispatch system.

- Parks is taking the lead on developing a Field Advisory Committee, comprised of public and private representatives involved with the use of county athletic fields, in coordination with Community Use of Public Facilities, MC Public Schools, and the Recreation Department. This Committee will meet quarterly to discuss, review and brainstorm on the permitting, planning, maintenance, policies, and fees related to athletic field use in the county. The first meeting is scheduled for May 2010.

## **ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY**

- Parks will continue to implement the Vision2030 project, in coordination with MCDR, by hosting public sessions and implementing a statistically valid survey to assess the needs of the citizenry of the County and identify core services and functions. A dedicated website will keep residents, community leaders and decision-makers informed of the progress.
- New Community Gardens will open in Bradley Local Park on May 1 (19 plots, with a waiting list of 21) and South Germantown on June 1 (80 plots). Two non-park sites in Takoma Park are being considered for community gardens using above ground planters, in partnership with Takoma Park.
- The “How Are We Doing” customer survey program will be expanded this spring to customers of our permitted facilities, providing valuable user satisfaction data on picnic areas, shelters, park activity buildings, fields, and campsites. We are currently planning a volunteer-based initiative to collect customer data on the use of non fee-based park amenities, such as trails and playgrounds.
- Planning a new farmer’s market located next to the Dairy Mooseum in South Germantown Recreational Park; this should open this summer.
- Launching a “Parks Matter” website and targeted communications allow us to reach our regular users, partners, and advocates with more specific information that will assist them in their relationship with the Department of Parks.
- We continue to respond quickly to citizen queries, meet with community groups on a regular basis, and will continue to make strong use of our ParkWatch program through the successful work of Park Police.



## **parkland acquisitions**

5.5788 acres added to Mill Creek Stream Valley Park

83.0337 acres added to Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park

1.54242 acres added to Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, Unit 12

0.02287 acres added to Seneca Landing Special Park

52.8743 acres added to McKnew Conservation Park (originally to be added to Fairland Recreational Park)

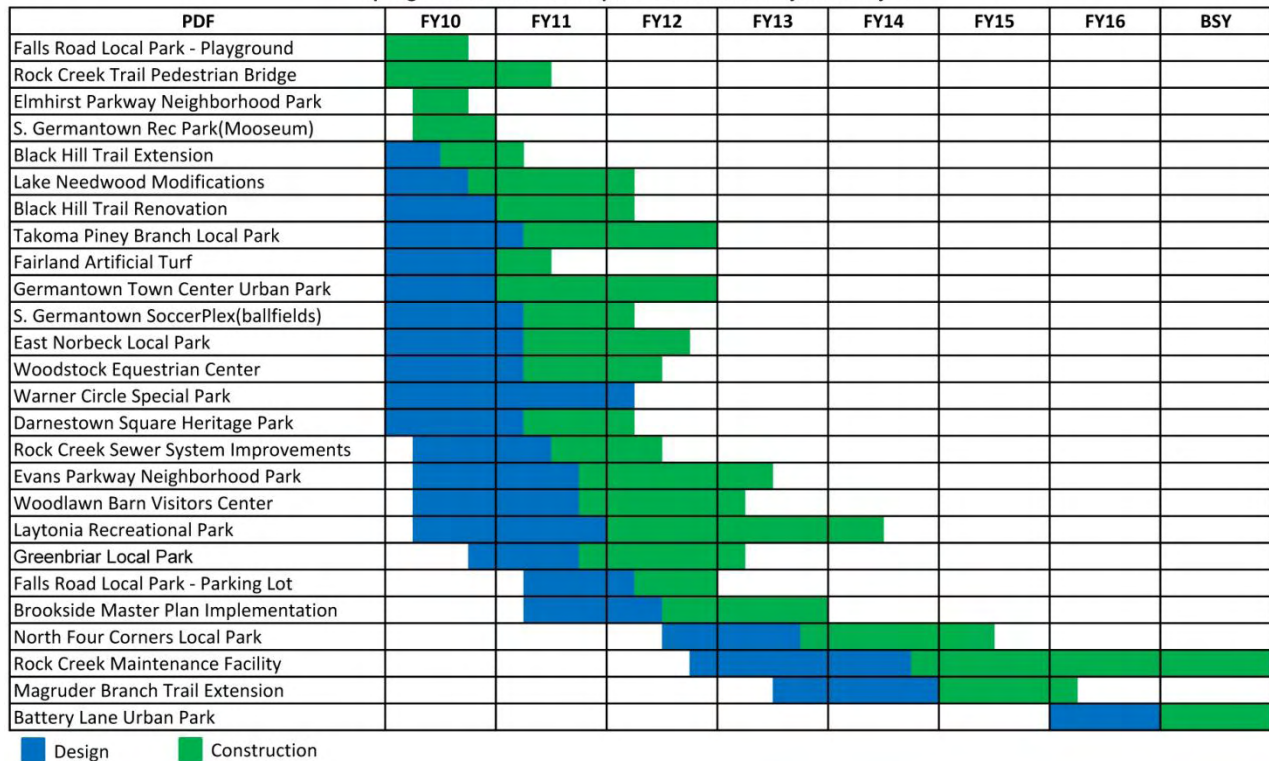
77.5510 acres added to Little Bennett Creek Stream Valley Park

Total: 220+ acres

## charts

- Status of CIP Projects
- Park Master Plans

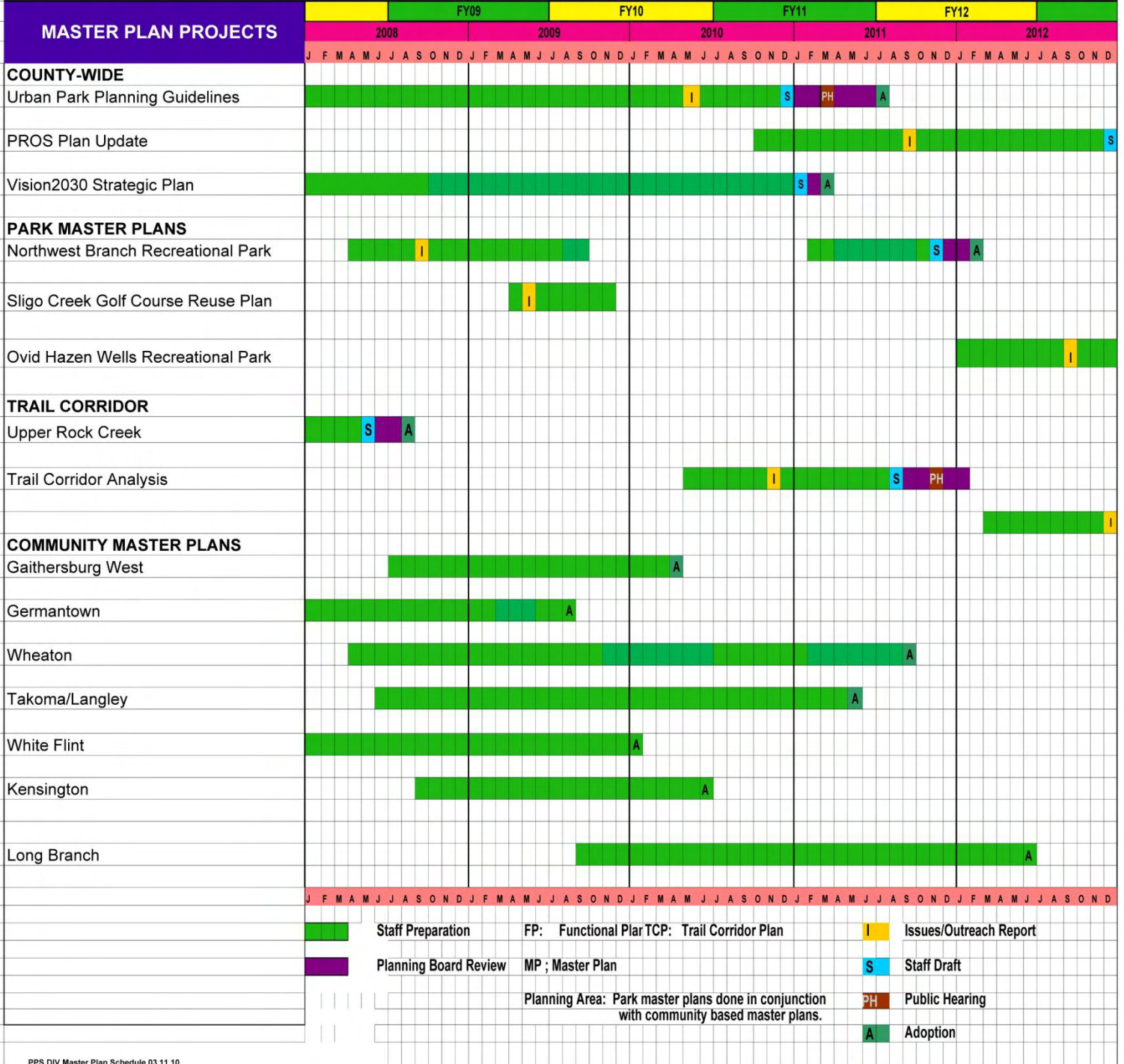
Spring 2010 Semi-Annual Report: Schedule for Major CIP Projects





# PARK PLANNING and STEWARDSHIP DIVISION 'S MASTER PLAN SCHEDULE

Sep-09



PPS DIV Master Plan Schedule 03 11 10





Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Planning Department | Department of Parks  
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Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

[www.MontgomeryPlanning.org](http://www.MontgomeryPlanning.org) | [www.MontgomeryParks.org](http://www.MontgomeryParks.org)