



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT** and  
**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION



## Spring 2018 Semiannual Report Outline

### Letter from the Planning Board Chair

#### Four Themes:

#### **#1 New Suburbanism**

*Planning Department:*

**From Parking Lots to Places:** The cause of New Suburbanism is advancing, particularly in North Bethesda, with exciting projects in the works. New developments, such as Pike and Rose, North Bethesda Center and Studio Plaza, are following the recommendations of the White Flint 2 Sector Plan, Rock Spring Master Plan and Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan, all approved by the County Council in late 2017. [include maps of plan areas and list of developments with names of developers, square footage]

**Trains, Cars and Bicycles:** Public hearings and Planning Board work sessions have been held for the MARC Rail Communities Plan, update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways and the Bicycle Master Plan. These transportation-related plans will be reviewed by the County Council this spring and summer.

**General Plan Update:** This seminal planning guide for Montgomery County, known as the General Plan, was adopted in 1964, revised in 1993 and intended to be updated in 2018. Recent innovations in cyberspace (cell phones, cloud computing, social media) and other anticipated technological innovations (autonomous vehicles, robotic delivery systems) are disrupting old land use models and assumptions about how to plan for growth and provide the infrastructure needed to serve residents and workers over the next 40-50 years. The county has already seen a steady decline in its office market over the past 10 years, and it has been challenging to meet the affordable housing need of a growing population. We are planning a General Plan update are to keep Montgomery County at the forefront of planning and development, maintain its competitive edge and preserve its quality of life.

**Safety and Connectivity:** The Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan aims to improve the pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, connectivity and safety along a 4-mile stretch of Veirs Mill Road from Wheaton to Rockville. The plan explores opportunities to realize the county's Vision Zero policy for reducing traffic fatalities and severe injuries, and provide more walkable, neighborhood-serving development at strategic locations. The planning effort complements the *Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit Study* recently completed by the Maryland State Highway Administration in coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

The Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan is being developed to address land uses and traffic conditions along the Georgia Avenue corridor from 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Silver Spring to the Forest Glen Metro Station. The plan complements efforts to improve the corridor by the Maryland State Highway Administration that will affect properties on both sides of the road. The

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has expressed interest in redeveloping its property near the Forest Glen Metrorail station.

*Department of Parks:*

**Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan:** Approved by the County Council WHEN, the plan uses a data-driven methodology to measure and map the community's access to park and open spaces in the most populated parts of the county. This information helps to identify and prioritize where and how to spend limited public funds, allowing the community more access to parks and open spaces.

**Bethesda Acquisition:** The acquisition of approximately a half acre at the corner of Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues will implement the vision of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan to create one of the most important park spaces in Bethesda. As recommended in the plan, the Capital Crescent Civic Green will provide an open space with a variety of spaces and amenities to support the active Bethesda Row area.

**Pop Up Parks-Urban Parks:** The Pop Up in Montgomery Parks' campaign is part of an ongoing initiative designed to bring people into parks to relax and reconnect with their communities. Play Specialists help people discover the amazing things that can happen in their local parks.

**Pepco Trail:** In January 2018, Montgomery Parks, Pepco and the Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE) broke ground on a new 6.5-mile natural surface, multi-use trail to connect Muddy Branch Stream Valley to South Germantown Recreation Park. The trail is being created and maintained through a collaboration among Montgomery Parks, Pepco and MORE.

**Vision Zero:** Vision Zero is a countywide initiative to eliminate fatalities and severe injuries on roads within the county by 2030. As part of this effort, Montgomery Parks is analyzing 79 intersections where our hiker-biker trails cross over roads in Montgomery County. Intersections have been prioritized based on factors such as speed limit, number of lanes, etc. A pilot project is underway to design improvements to 18 mid-block crossings, including six hiker-biker and 12 natural surface trails. Construction of these improvements will begin this summer. A special interagency working group is studying additional safety improvements to the intersection where the Matthew Henson Trail crosses Veirs Mill Road.

## **#2 Engaging Diverse Communities, Meeting Diverse Needs**

*Planning Department:*

**Online Tools for Public Engagement:** Google translate was added to GIS maps to encourage foreign-born and non-English speakers to participate in planning efforts. A digital feedback map was developed to solicit observations from residents, business owners and stakeholders about the assets and challenges in the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan area. The comments about transit, trails, retail, parks, employment, housing and connectivity in the neighborhoods around Veirs Mill Road helped to inform the master planning recommendations.

**Bicycle Master Plan Coloring Book:** This free, 34-page book was developed by the Planning Department staff to present the types of bikeways included in the plan to the public in an accessible, fun way. Since the goal of the Plan is to create a low-stress bicycle network that will let people of all ages and abilities feel comfortable riding a bike, the book seemed fitting, since

coloring has also been shown to be a stress-relieving activity. Each black and white page depicts different types of bikeways, such as neighborhood greenways, separated bike lanes and trails.

**ADA Compliance Efforts:** Compliance activities under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are ongoing in the Planning and Parks Departments. We have refreshed our web sites to raise our level of compliance and working to improve our approaches and procedures to produce more accessible documents. Training sessions on accessibility are underway in both Montgomery Departments. A joint Department Task Force is advancing this effort in 2018 to broaden skills and meet regulatory compliance through updated document formats and procedures.

*Department of Parks:*

**Athletic Field Showcase:** This event highlights the multiple ways we work to improve the quality of our athletic fields. Demonstrations of our state-of-the-art equipment and techniques show the community how we manage and maintain county athletic fields. Moisture management on athletic fields will be the focus of our next showcase WHEN HELD.

**Water Quality:** Montgomery Parks supports more than 500 miles of stream valleys throughout Montgomery County. Environmental protection begins with our engineers and natural resources staff who design facilities to mitigate impacts. Our volunteer groups participate in cleanups and advocate on behalf of environmental issues.

**Special Events and Festivals:** Throughout the year, Parks hosts dozens of festivals and special events that focus on topics such as sustainability and recreation. We highlight Earth Month in April and encourage the community to become involved in sustainable practices. In July, we partner with Montgomery County Recreation and encourage people to visit the parks and get active.

**Marye Wells Harley Dream Scholarship:** In honor of the former Montgomery Planning Board commissioner, this new initiative provides children ages six to 14 with an opportunity to attend Montgomery Parks' summer camps. Scholarships are awarded based on financial need and we will distribute to as many applicants as funding permits.

**Accessibility:** Program Access continues to promote and enhance access for all by coordinating reasonable modifications for individuals with disabilities to be successfully included in Parks leisure programs and events. Ongoing staff training and park accessibility projects remain a priority for our program access team.

**Long Branch:** Montgomery Parks is working to promote social equity and strengthen its role in communities where people may not typically be engaged with their parks and with park programs, facilities and offerings. Park improvement projects, park and stream cleanups, park police presence and park activation programming, are just some of the ways we are providing outreach and community engagement. [what is the connection to Long Branch??]

### **#3 Strengthening Economic Competitiveness by Creating Great Places**

*Planning Department:*

**Winter Speakers Series:** The Planning Department held a three-part Winter Speaker Series in December 2017 and January and February 2018. The series, titled The Economic Future of the

Suburbs: Infill, Commerce, Placemaking, examined the shift away from sprawling, car-centric places to more walkable, mixed-use and urban-style communities. The sessions presented strategies for infill housing, examined retail trends, discussed the conversion of aging office buildings to new uses and looked at ways of creating more vibrant, active parks and public spaces in the suburbs.

**Research:** Our Research and Special Projects Division is completing significant analyses and studies of retail trends, senior housing and colocation of public facilities.

Retail Trends – completed and will be reviewed by the County Council in spring 2018.

Colocation of Public Facilities – will be completed and released in March 2018.

Senior Housing – will be completed and released in March 2018.

Employment Trends – will be completed in spring 2018.

**Notable Regulatory Cases:** List and photos will be included.

**Regulatory Statistics:** Chart of recent statistics for preliminary and site plans, and record plat reviews will be included.

#### *Department of Parks:*

**Parks Speaker Series:** This year, Montgomery Parks introduced a series of monthly events showcasing highly acclaimed speakers addressing issues related to the changing open space and trail needs of county residents. Topics include urban park planning and development, urban living and the need for open spaces and parks, partnering to have more activated parks and the safety needs of urban parks.

**Cricket Field:** South Germantown Recreation Park will soon be home to our first full-size cricket field. Construction started in September 2017 and is expected to be completed in spring 2019. The area will be heavily reserved for the permitted use and will host the more than 20 cricket teams in Montgomery County.

**Trail Development:** Ongoing trail development and connectivity creates a world-class trail experience by giving users easy access to our natural and cultural resources, and a regional network that connects major destinations and recreational areas for both residents and visitors.

**Partnership for Advanced Learning (PALS):** The ongoing partnership between Parks and the University of Maryland continues to provide high-quality and low-cost solutions to challenges facing Montgomery Parks. Students recently completed an assessment investigating the economic impact of public parks on property values.

**Visitation and Revenue:** Montgomery Parks' facilities connect people to activities that promote education as well as healthy and active lifestyles.

**Solar Fields:** In spring 2018? CORRECT? we will complete the construction and installation of the solar fields in South Germantown Recreation Park and Rock Creek Regional Park. Our partner, Standard Solar, will own and operate the fields.

**New Parks and Park Updates:** Laytonia Park in Gaithersburg provides four athletic fields with lighting and bleachers for a premium game experience. The supporting facilities include a shelter/restroom building, playground, half-basketball court and trails. The project is nearing

completion and a grand opening is planned for late spring 2018. Upcoming improvements will include additional parking and maintenance storage.

#### **#4 Achievements and Other Projects**

*Planning Department:*

**NAIOP award:** In October 2017, the DC-Maryland chapter of NAIOP (National Association for Industrial and Office Parks) honored the Planning Department with its Best of the Best Award in Excellence in Quality Land Use and Collaboration in Urban Design. The Planning Department is one of six winners of the 2017 Best of the Best Award and the first governmental entity to be awarded this honor.

**American Planning Association National Conference presentations:** Five proposals from the Planning Department were selected for sessions at the [American Planning Association's national conference](#) to be held from April 21 through April 24, 2018 in New Orleans. These presentations will be given by Department leadership and staff, and Planning Board members:

- Lessons in New Suburbanism
- Smart Tools for Recreation Planning
- Resilient Retail in the Internet Age
- Engaging Hard-to-Reach Communities
- Public Art Ecosystems.

**Makeover Montgomery 4:** Scheduled from May 9 through May 11, 2018 in College Park and Silver Spring, MD, this regional conference is co-sponsored by the Planning Department and [University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth](#). This year's event will focus on healthy, smart, inclusive and competitive communities. Presentations will focus on innovative planning and policy tools, and strategies that can help transform our suburbs into exciting, attractive and sustainable communities.

*Department of Parks:*

**Montgomery County Design Excellence Awards:** The Department of Parks won the 2017 Design Excellence Award in the Landscapes and Open Space category for the Little Bennett Regional Park Day Use Area.

**School to Work Business Partner of the Year:** This award honors the partnership of Montgomery Parks and Ivymount School in Rockville to host students at Black Hill Regional Park, Brookside Nature Center, Locust Grove Nature Center and Wheaton Park Stables.

**2017 Employment Trailblazer Award:** The Montgomery County Department of Parks was awarded the 2017 Employment Trailblazer Award at the 3rd Annual Seeking Empowerment, Employment and Community.

**Governor's Crime Prevention Award:** Maryland Governor Larry Hogan recognized Park Police Sergeant FIRST NAME Pirtle for her work with troubled youth in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

**The Rock Creek Maintenance Yard Project:** Now in the final stages of completion, this facility will soon be fully operational. The design and operation of the Administrative Building will meet the criteria established for LEED Gold certification as determined by the United States Green

Building Council. The existing site was analyzed and subsequently chosen for redevelopment to conserve existing resources and to best utilize the available workforce.

**Candy Cane City Playground:** This playground inside Meadowbrook Local Park in Chevy Chase is one of the oldest and most heavily used in the county. In August 2017, our maintenance facility gave the playground a much-needed facelift by adding new landscaping, installing new benches and fencing, creating ADA-accessible parking spaces and repainting playground amenities with red and white stripes.

**Brookside Gardens Growing Greenhouse:** This project was part of phase five of Brookside Garden's Master Plan and was completed in February 2018. The project replaced small, inefficient growing spaces with a state-of-the-art glass greenhouse that features an energy-efficient design and a 25,000-gallon cistern to capture and reuse rainwater.