



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

MCPB Item # _____
 4/30/09

April 17, 2009

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board *M Bradford*
VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks
 Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Parks for Administration *J Hench*
 John Hench, Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division
FROM: Brooke Farquhar, Supervisor, Park and Trail Planning, Park Planning *Brooke Farquhar*
SUBJECT: White Flint Sector Plan Worksession #8: Parks

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Review Park Recommendations

BACKGROUND:

The Planning Board held a Public Hearing on the White Flint Sector Plan on January 12, 2009. The need for a public presentation and discussion of the park recommendations was raised during the hearing and subsequent worksessions.

The primary purpose of the April 30 worksession on Parks is to review the public park recommendations. During the worksession, Parks Department staff's presentation will focus on the following topics:

- I. Role of parks in the Sector Plan open space system
- II. Connections to parks within and beyond the Sector Plan boundary
- III. Park Planning Recommendations: Wall Local Park and the Civic Green Urban Park
- IV. Potential elementary school effects on White Flint Neighborhood Park

I. Role of Parks in The Sector Plan Open Space System

The existing pattern of parks in White Flint and the surrounding area reflects the 1992 North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan's land use proposals for White Flint. The new vision for the study area includes a more urban pattern and a greater mix of uses. The existing pattern of parks and open space has been reevaluated in light of this urban vision. The proposed open space system for White Flint will support a vibrant and sustainable urban center by creating open spaces that will be comfortable, attractive, easily accessible, and provide a range of experiences for a wide variety of people. To that end, the public park recommendations support the Sector Plan's following proposed typology of open spaces:

- For the Corridor: An active park for White Flint and surrounding areas at Wall Local Park
- For all of White Flint: a central civic green
- For each neighborhood: a neighborhood green
- For each block: an urban square
- For each building: recreation space
- For each residence: private outdoor space

Those open spaces that are intended to become focal points of community life for the entire planning area are recommended as public parkland: Wall Local Park (renovated), and a new Civic Green Urban Park in a central location near Metro and a high-density mixed- use area.

II. Connections to Parks Within And Beyond the Sector Plan Boundary

The sector plan lies between two major north-south park trail systems: Rock Creek to the east and Cabin John to the west. The linkage of these key regional trail and bikeway systems is critical to provide residents greater opportunities to walk and cycle in the area and reduce automobile dependency and will be provided by a bike path planned along Montrose Parkway and a north/south bikeway (a former trolley right-of-way converted to bike use) that is proposed to be extended through the planning area. The loop system proposed in the plan is designed to link all proposed neighborhood open spaces, and to provide pleasant walking routes from residences and businesses to open space destinations throughout the planning area. Connectors to the loop will link destinations such as the Josiah Henson Site and other parks beyond the planning area boundary to the Sector Plan area. The proposed East-West promenade traverses the White Flint core with destinations along the way, including Wall Local Park, the Aquatic Center, the Civic Green and other open space areas on the east side of Maryland Route 355.

III. Park Planning Recommendations

This plan recommends improvements to Wall Local Park and inclusion of a new Civic Green Urban Park. These two park planning recommendations, which will help implement the plan's Green Space Concept, (**Figure 1**) are as follows:

1. Update the plan for Wall Local Park to reflect its role as the key urban recreation destination in an urbanizing area.

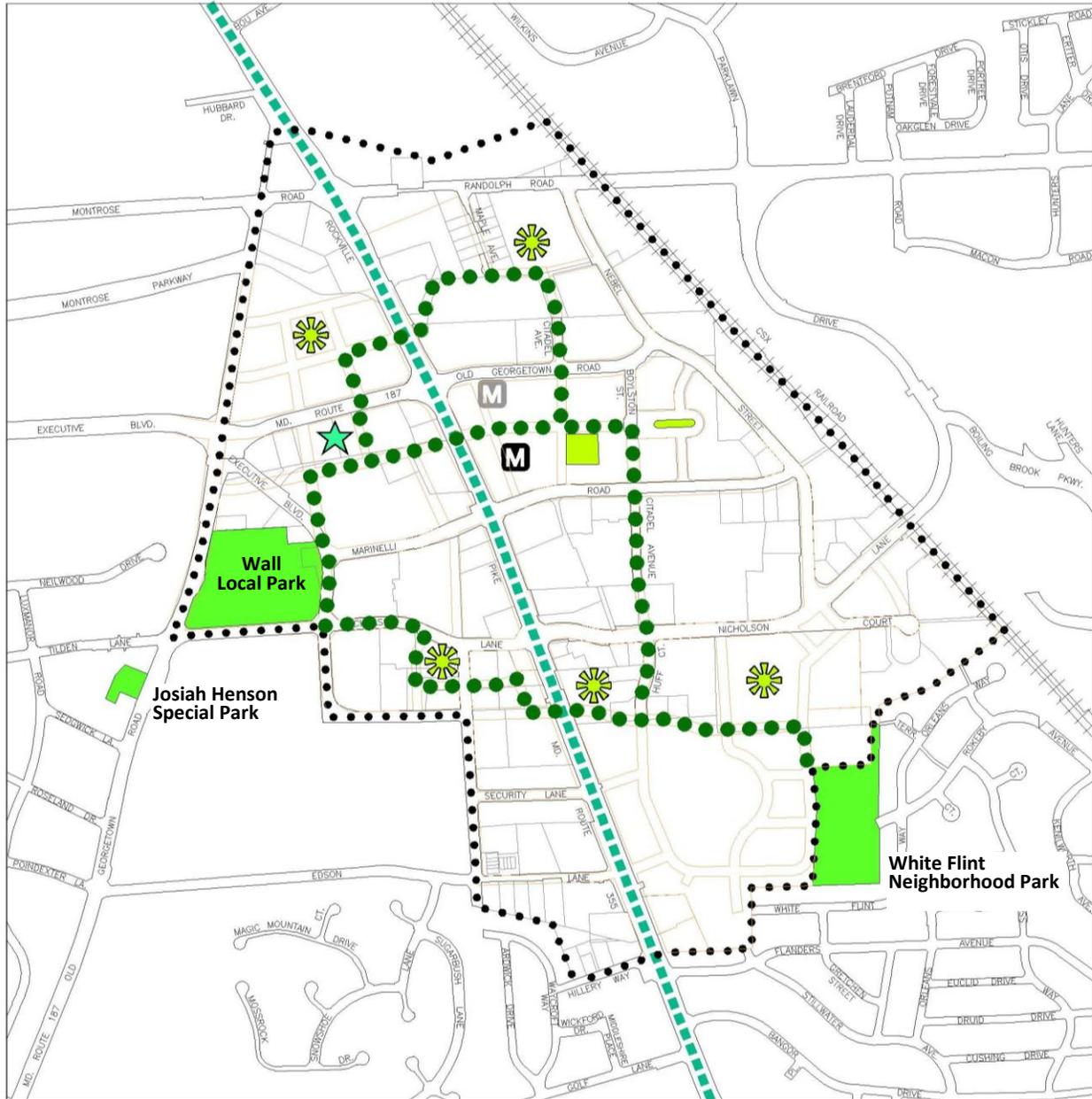
As White Flint becomes more urban, Wall Local Park should emerge as a major park for the corridor. The park should be improved as a multipurpose recreation destination for the increasing population of White Flint and surrounding areas and a "link" between the Josiah Henson Site and the civic core of the area. With the park's location only two blocks from the White Flint Metro, connectivity to the station is critical.

The 1992 North Bethesda Plan recommended expanding the park by acquiring two adjoining parcels north of the park. This plan recommends achieving additional parkland through a public/private partnership with adjacent properties to relocate the existing surface parking within a parking structure built in conjunction with new residential development. This approach would minimize public sector funding of relocating the parking. The addition of residential development near the park would provide constant surveillance, enhance park use, and help animate the park.

The redesigned park should provide recreational activities to complement the Aquatic Center while retaining the current character of a green oasis. New facilities could include:

- level grassy areas for leisure and informal play to serve people of all ages
- an outdoor splash park
- an expanded indoor pool area
- skateboarding facilities
- a nature area with "heart-smart" trail
- an expanded playground area
- a pedestrian connection to the Josiah Henson Site

Figure 1- Green Space Concept



- ● ● ● Sector Plan Area Boundary
- Parkland
- ● ● ● ● Loop
- M White Flint Metro Station
- ★ Civic Green
- M Potential New Metro Entrance
- Existing Neighborhood Open Space
- ★ Proposed Neighborhood Open Space
- Boulevard



The areas of highest quality trees along Old Georgetown Road should be retained and enhanced in the redesign of the park. Programming and design of the park will occur as part of the Facility Plan, with public input, to be overseen by the Department of Parks and coordinated with the Department of Recreation, and potentially funded by developers through an amenity fund project.

2. Designate a new urban park to serve as the Civic Green for all of White Flint.

The Civic Green is proposed to be White Flint's central public place for outdoor community-wide activities and events, as well as a place for informal passive recreation. It should be located within the Conference Center Block. The Civic Green should be under Parks Department ownership because of its important role as a focal point of community life for the entire planning area. There are two ways to obtain the land for the Civic Green: through dedication, if there is assemblage of properties within the Conference Center Block, or acquisition with public funds. Whether acquired or dedicated, the Civic Green should be large enough and appropriately designed to:

- Accommodate major outdoor activities, public events, gatherings, and celebrations.
- Allow for local street closures to provide more event space.
- Draw people from surroundings to participate in local events.

If assemblage is not possible, there are properties within the Conference Center Block large enough and in an appropriate location to function as the Civic Green and should be acquired with public funds. After public acquisition occurs, it may be that the adjoining property owners become interested in redevelopment. They may wish to enter into a public/private venture to better accomplish the public purpose of the Civic Green. In that event, it may be prudent to consider land swaps or other options to achieve the desired outcome.

IV. Potential Elementary School Effects on White Flint Neighborhood Park

Concerns about the effects on White Flint Neighborhood Park of a potential elementary school to the north were raised during the public hearing. Schools adjacent to parks in other locations in the County often utilize the adjacent parkland for recreation. Preliminary analysis shows that the school site could accommodate recreation facilities if a compact, urban footprint were used. However, the park's facilities could supplement the recreation facilities on the school site. At the very least, a school adjacent to White Flint Neighborhood Park would be likely to require a trail connection to the park and visual access into the park. The primary concern of the Parks Department is that the area between the park facilities and the potential school site is heavily wooded with significant slopes.

If the site is chosen by Montgomery County Public Schools, the Parks Department recommends that any redesign of parkland should:

- Minimize impacts to the wooded area.
- Retain community access to the recreational facilities in the park.
- Receive community input through a public process.

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