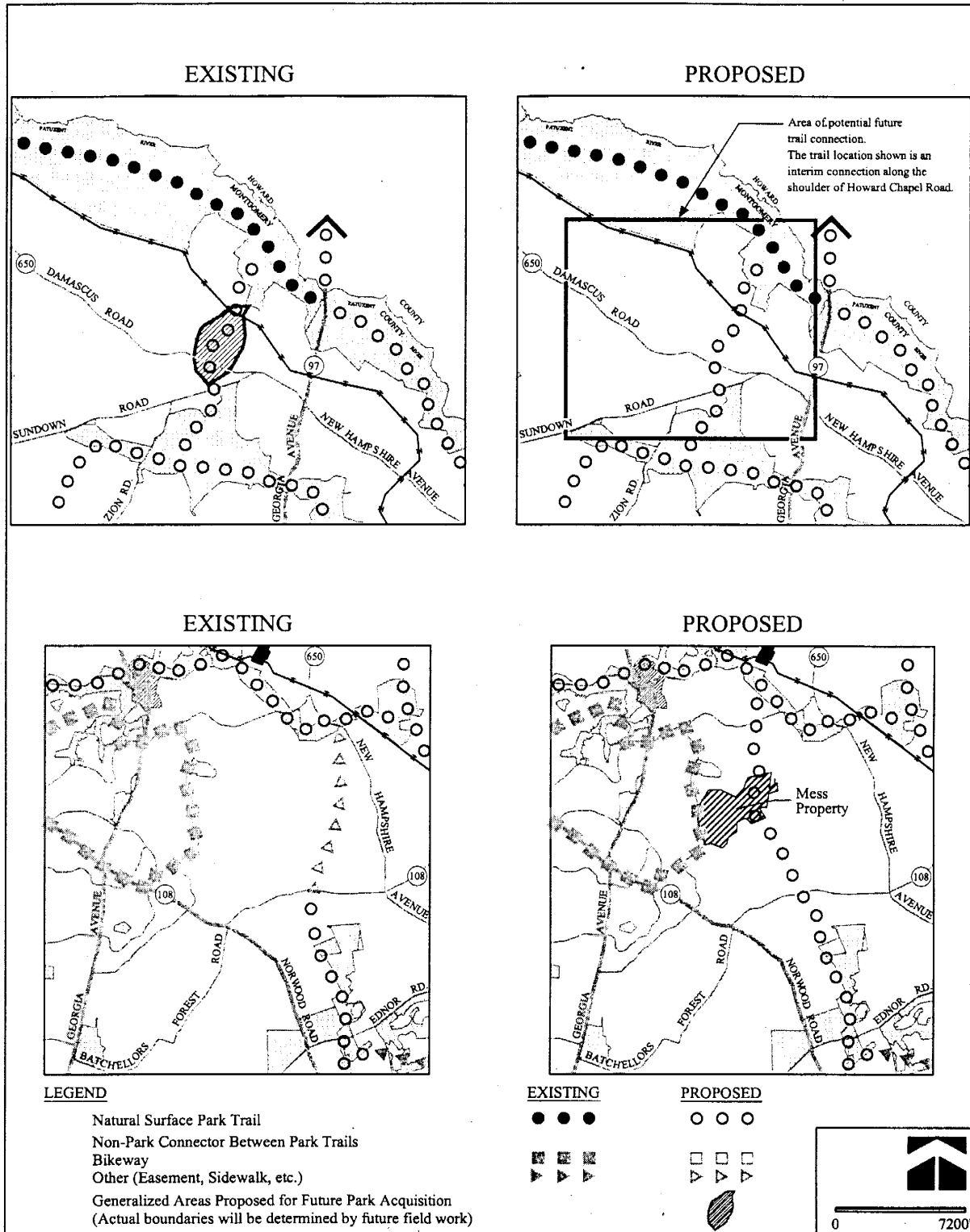


Proposed Amendments To Countywide Park Trails Plan



The only additional change staff is recommending is to reflect the Planning Board's approval in January 2004, to rename the Northwest Branch Trail Corridor as the Rachel Carson Greenway.

Proposed Changes to the Public Hearing Draft Olney Master Plan

To implement the Countywide Park Trails Plan vision of trail connectivity and to enhance community connections to the larger trail system, certain trail-related recommendations are included in the Public Hearing Draft Olney Master Plan. These are listed on pages 111-112 of the Olney Master Plan text.

Staff recommends the following changes to the Public Hearing Olney Master Plan:

- **Highlight** in the Transportation Plan the need for **the proposed** bike paths along Emory Lane and Muncaster Mill Road to **serve as the preferred** alternative to locating a park trail in sensitive biodiversity areas of North Branch of Rock Creek.
- The Trail Corridor concept for Olney and adjoining Rock Creek planning areas depends on **the proposed** bike path along Emory Lane to provide future park trail connectivity in the North Branch of Rock Creek Park. As recommended in the Public Hearing Draft Plan (p.111):

Minimize impacts to the sensitive biodiversity areas in the North Branch of Rock Creek by routing the proposed hard surface trail in that area at the narrowest point to the proposed bike path along Emory Lane.

Bikepaths along Emory Lane and Muncaster Mill Road are included in the Transportation Plan's table of proposed bikeways, but this recommendation is so critical to the environmental protection of this area of Rock Creek that it needs to be highlighted. Staff recommends including it as a separate item in the text of the Transportation Plan chapter to ensure any future road projects in the vicinity incorporate a safe, attractive bikeway linkage of the trail system. The same language should be included in the discussion of Muncaster Mill Road, as a bike path will be needed here as well to complete the trail connection.

- **Re-name** Northwest Branch Trail Corridor to Rachel Carson Greenway per Planning Board action, January 2004.

C. Resource Protection

Correct the Existing and Proposed Parkland map to include the portion of the Norbeck Country Club recommended for parkland to protect the forest buffer, small tributaries, springs and wetland adjacent to the North Branch Stream Valley Park.

The Existing and Proposed Parkland mistakenly excludes an area proposed for parkland shown on the Land Use Plan map. As noted in the Land Use chapter on page 37:

If (Norbeck Country Club) is redeveloped to another use, the environmental goals of protecting the water quality of the North Branch suggest that clustering any development away from the stream valley would be the most appropriate pattern with land along the stream valley dedicated as parkland.

D. Legacy Open Space

The *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan* includes several sites that were identified as potential candidates for the Legacy Open Space Program (Class III or Appendix D properties). During area master plan processes, staff is evaluating these sites within the master plan area as well as reviewing other sites within the master plan area that may be appropriate candidates for the Legacy Open Space program. As part of the Olney Master Plan process, ten such sites were evaluated in more detail. Staff has concluded and the Olney Master Plan recommends that eight of these sites meet the criteria of the Legacy Open Space program (see Attachment 5 - Legacy Open Space Recommendations).

The Legacy Open Space Program is designed to protect valuable open spaces through a variety of tools, ranging from easements and private donations to acquisition and dedication. The protection techniques recommended for the Olney Master Plan sites are listed on pages 137-140 of the Public Hearing Draft Master Plan. Staff is recommending one change to the recommended protection techniques for one of these properties, Central Union Mission, for the reasons discussed below.

Central Union Mission

The Central Union Mission operates Camp Bennett on a 219-acre parcel adjacent to the Hawlings River Stream Valley Park north of Brookeville off Georgia Avenue. The site consists of 129 acres of forest and 59 acres of agricultural land, with approximately 30 acres of cleared land immediately surrounding the camp facilities. The camp facilities sit perched on a knoll just above the Hawlings River and one of its tributaries.

The site was evaluated for designation as a Legacy Open Space site as part of the Olney Master Plan. The Public Hearing Draft recommends adding the large wooded area of the site to the Legacy Open Space program as part of the Water Supply Target Area (Class II). The Public Hearing Draft further recommends that the site be protected through the use of easements if the current use continues, or through dedication or acquisition if the land use changes.

Representatives of the Mission have submitted testimony that they would like a revision to the protection technique recommendations to allow more flexibility during the development review process (see Attachment 9). In addition, a pre-preliminary plan has been submitted by the Mission showing a potential layout for 33 lots, mostly in the agricultural land with some encroachment into the forest. The Central Union Mission

does not wish to dedicate any land to parks as part of this subdivision application. They feel they have been good stewards of the land, as evidenced by the current high quality of the resource, and wish to continue that stewardship without any dedication to parkland as development proceeds. A main concern of the Camp is security and public access.

After considering the new information regarding the Mission's goals and objectives and exploring three approaches to protecting the large forested areas and sensitive stream valley buffers along the Hawlings River on this property, staff makes the following recommendation:

- **Amend** the recommended protection technique as follows (new language in **bold**):
 - Protect through easement with current use.
 - Seek dedication or acquisition **of the portion of the forested resource that adjoins the Hawlings River Stream Valley Park** if land use changes. **Rely on easements to protect the forested areas in the eastern portion of the site.**

The three options for protecting the natural resources on this property analyzed by staff are illustrated in Attachments 6-8 and described below.

- **Option A** – The current recommendation in the Olney Public Hearing Draft Plan proposes the entire area of high quality resources (approximately 120 acres) be placed in the park system if and when the existing camp and agricultural uses are replaced with new development. As noted in the most recent letter from the Central Union Mission to the Planning Board (see Attachment A), the Mission would like to cluster development onto the agricultural fields and some forest, and continue operating their camp. The Olney Master Plan recommendation did not envision the camp continuing its operation once development occurred. Option A needs to be reexamined in light of this change.
- **Option B** – This option focuses on protecting the resources that adjoin the M-NCPPC parkland (approximately 55 acres) during any future development. This approach would preserve through parkland the large block of forest northwest of an existing cleared driveway and add sensitive stream valley buffer areas to the park system while keeping large areas of forest in camp ownership.
- **Option C** – This option relies primarily on forest conservation and other easements to protect the natural resources on the site. In this option, only a small portion of the property (approximately 10 acres) would become part of the park system to complete park protection of the Hawlings River stream valley buffers. This option follows standard practice to request, at a minimum, dedication of stream valley buffers that are adjacent to existing parkland.