MONTGOMERY COUNTY

parks + planning

spring 2016 semiannual report

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LETTER FROM THE **PLANNING BOARD CHAIR**

DEAR PRESIDENT FLOREEN AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL:

I am pleased to present this spring 2016 semiannual report updating you on the recent work of the Planning Board, Planning Department and Department of Parks. As in past reports, we remain focused on connecting the County's land use policies and plans to its goals for transportation, housing and economic development. These connections are crucial to ensuring that the County remains an attractive place to live and work. High quality planning and design help us to compete for jobs and skilled workers, and are vital to delivering the sort of schools, parks and other amenities that make our community strong.

Make no mistake – the alternatives to growth and change are stagnation and decline. We are focused on managing our growth to ensure that it helps our County adapt to the needs of the future so it will be a place that residents love not only today, but in the decades to come.

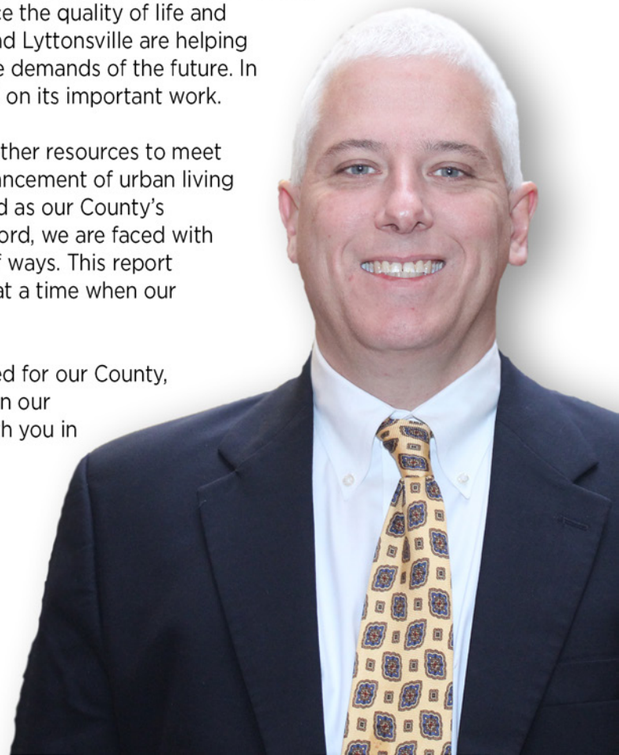
Our incorporation of new ideas in the Subdivision Staging Policy; our studies of the office, retail and rental housing markets; and our plans to enhance the quality of life and adaptability of neighborhoods like Westbard, Bethesda and Lyttonsville are helping our communities to reconcile the desires of today with the demands of the future. In this report, the Planning Department provides more detail on its important work.

Similarly, our Department of Parks must use its land and other resources to meet a variety of critical needs, from active recreation and enhancement of urban living to environmental protection and historic preservation. And as our County's population becomes more diverse in every sense of the word, we are faced with the challenge of meeting these needs in a wider variety of ways. This report describes the efforts underway to address this challenge at a time when our budget is tightly constrained.

I am proud of the work of our staff and the results achieved for our County, and pleased to provide you with this semiannual update on our collective efforts. I appreciate the opportunity to work with you in service to our County's residents and its future.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Anderson
Planning Board Chair



PARKS NOTABLE **ACHIEVEMENTS**

NRPA Gold Medal: The Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission was honored with an unprecedented sixth Gold Medal from the National Recreation and Parks Association in 2015. No other agency has ever won six gold medals. This award is a testament to unwavering commitment to excellence in parks and recreation, and our commitment to managing our parks and operations responsibly.

Montgomery Parks Foundation welcomed highly accomplished Executive Director Michael Nardolilli and raised more than $900,000. In addition, the Foundation constructed shade structures at Cedar Creek Local Park, worked to diversify its Board of Trustees and co-sponsored the highly successful Josiah Henson Leadership Conference, featuring former Congressman Al Wynn, Catherine Leggett and two panels of speakers.

Urban Park Activation: Montgomery Parks successfully piloted an Urban Park Activation program that brought hundreds of people out to events, including "Touch-a-Truck" at Wall Park, "Dig and Draw" at Ellsworth Park, "Sharks in the Park" at Woodside Urban Park and monthly cookouts at Wall Park. Based on the success of this program, we plan to expand our efforts to activate urban parks in 2016.

Educational Programs for Schoolchildren: Montgomery Parks offers a variety of educational programming to connect teachers and students with nature, the environment and local history. In collaboration with the Lathrop E. Smith Environmental Education Center, Montgomery Parks offers curriculum-based environmental educational programming for students in grades Pre-K through 12. In order to support Montgomery County schools in meeting the mandated Maryland Environmental Literacy Graduation Requirement, Montgomery Parks waives fees for K-12 environmental education programs . Montgomery Parks also offers affordable educational field trips about local history in the county, available for students in grades four and up. Students who participate in these programs engage in topics related to enslavement, life on a farm, early medicine, going to school in a one-room schoolhouse and more.

Recent Awards: Several Montgomery Parks projects have been recognized with awards, including: Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park (Wintergreen Award for Excellence in Green Building, Neighborhood Project Category from the U.S. Green Building Council, Maryland Chapter; Planning & Design with Environmental Protection in Mind Award from the Maryland Recreation & Parks Association); Germantown Town Center Urban Park (Built by Women Competition, landscaping category); Woodlawn Stone Barn Visitors Center, the Darby Store, and the King Farm Dairy Mooseum (Montgomery Preservation Awards).

PLANNING NOTABLE **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Planning Great Communities: The Planning Board reviewed a number of significant regulatory cases, including Black Hills and Century in Germantown (right). The County Council approved the Montgomery Village Master Plan – the first update in 50 years. Progress was made on plans for Downtown Bethesda, Greater Lyttonsville and Westbard, all of which benefited from public meetings. The Rock Spring Master Plan, White Flint 2 Sector Plan, Bicycle Master Plan and MARC Rail Communities Plan were launched in 2015.

Assessing the Regional Office Market: In December 2015, the Planning Department partnered with the Washington, DC chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to conduct a Technical Assistance Panel review of the Rock Spring and Executive Boulevard areas in North Bethesda. This review follows the Department's successful office study completed earlier in 2015 and suggests ways of making the office parks more economically competitive, multi-use and walkable.

Launching the First Design Excellence Award: The Design Excellence initiative was expanded through an award competition to set an example of high-quality design for architects and developers to follow. The top prize was awarded to the Silver Spring Civic Building in October 2015 at a design celebration co-sponsored with the Potomac Valley chapter of the American Institute of Architects. View the full recap of the event at **montgomeryplanning.org/designxaward**.

Updating the Subdivision Staging Policy: Planning staff is researching new ideas in transportation and school capacity planning in preparation for drafting new growth policy regulations. This effort kicked off in March 2015 with the Infrastructure Forum co-sponsored with Councilmember Roger Berliner. Learn more about the update to the Subdivision Staging Policy at **montgomeryplanning.org/ssp**.

Featuring African American Communities: The Planning Department worked with Councilmember George Leventhal to launch a map of historically African American places in the County. The project uses GIS technology to present information and photos of 24 buildings and places. The map is designed to be expanded over time to include additional places that hold special value and tell the rich and varied history of the African American experience. You can view the full map at **mcatlas.org/blackhistorymap**.

Documenting the County's Modern Past: In October 2015, the Department published the book, *Montgomery Modern: Modern Architecture in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1979*, to document the County's impressive legacy of mid-20th-century buildings and neighborhoods.

NEW SUBURBANISM

The Parks and Planning Departments are focused on transforming our suburbs from sprawling, car-centric places to compact **communities supportive of walking, biking and taking transit**. To reach this goal, our recent efforts include **creating mixed-use, infill development and active urban parks.**

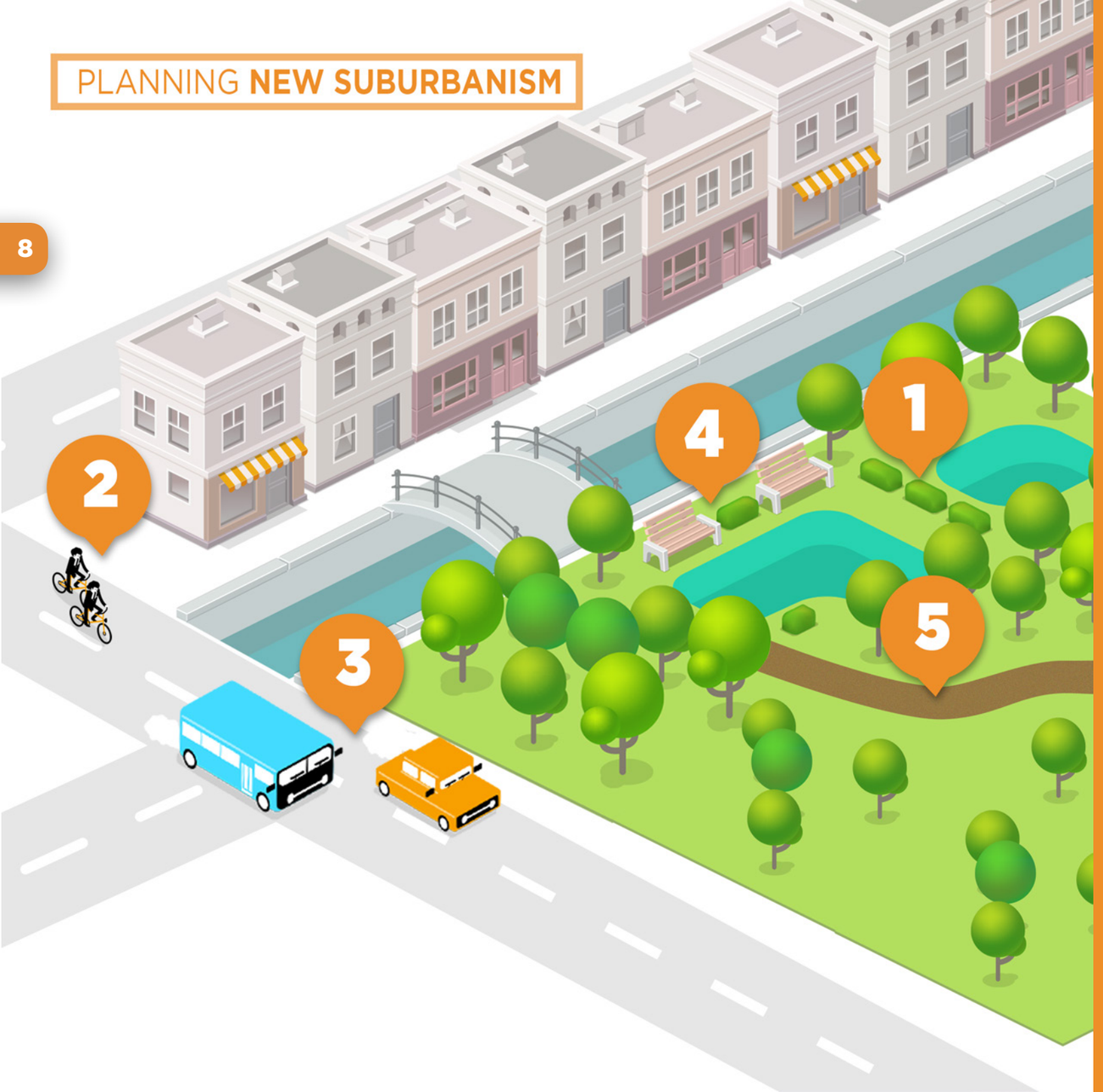
Establishing green spaces and **varied recreation facilities for all ages**, expanding trails and **separating bicycle lanes from vehicular traffic** are all part of ongoing and future plans for the new suburbanism.

ACTIVATING URBAN PARKS

Active, vibrant parks are important parts of healthy, connected communities. Montgomery Parks is expanding its successful urban park activation program by partnering with regional and local organizations to offer a variety of fun, educational and healthy activities that will bring urban parks to life, enrich our neighborhoods and provide places where neighbors can become friends.

CREATING ACTIVE OPEN SPACE

We must continue efforts to acquire and build the right parks in the right places to ensure parks are available and actively used in growing urban areas. A particularly challenging aspect of protecting open space is funding park acquisitions in developing urban areas. While the Department has been resourceful in leveraging various tools and funding sources, there is more work to be done to ensure County residents have green open space that is easily accessible.



1 ENVIRONMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR PLANS

Protecting, upgrading and creating parks and open spaces are important to the success of several recent plans. The Westbard Sector Plan recommends transforming the Willett Branch from a storm drain into a natural stream. The Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan proposes civic greens for informal gatherings and events, greenways to create welcoming entrances into parks and urban parks to provide neighborhood recreational opportunities.

2 BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

Efforts include implementing the digital Cycling Concerns map to engage stakeholders, holding community meetings throughout the County in fall 2015, organizing a Bicycle Advisory Group to help steer the plan and securing Planning Board approval for separated bike lanes in the Life Sciences Center and White Flint area.
montgomeryplanning.org/bikeplan

3 WINTER SPEAKERS SERIES

Transportation alternatives were topics of the three-session Winter Speaker Series in 2016. *Smart Moves: New Ideas about Bikes, Cars and Transit* addressed new approaches to cycling, transit, trails and other modes of travel. The ideas generated from the series are helping to inform the Planning Department's current plans and policies.
montgomeryplanning.org/smartmoves

4 RECREATION GUIDELINES UPDATE

The Planning Department is currently revising the existing Recreation Guidelines, last adopted in 1992, in response to the County's changing demographics and the need for more varied recreation spaces. With the help of local experts, planners are studying new types of recreation facilities for all age groups to improve the quality of development.
montgomeryplanning.org/recguidelines

- Meet the needs of specific age groups, including teenagers, young adults, seniors.
- Ensure the sustainability of facilities.
- Coordinate new facilities with public and private recreational systems.

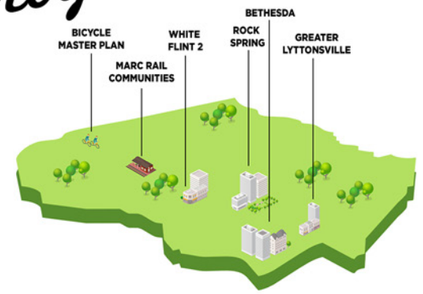
5 EXPANDING TRAILS

Montgomery Parks' trails are some of the most popular amenities in our parks system. We have more than 230 miles of trails that connect people with active lifestyles and nature. We continue to maintain and build trails, enhance access and connect existing trails so that our users and residents have access to trails near where they work, play and live. After building out the comprehensive amendment to the Countywide Park Trails Plan, which guides future investments in major park trails of countywide significance, we estimate that nearly 100 percent of County residents will be located within three miles of a trail or non-park bikeway connector.

236.9 TOTAL MILES OF TRAILS

PAVED TRAILS **NATURAL SURFACE TRAILS**

Plans In Progress



Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan proposes strategies for capitalizing on future Purple Line stations and connecting residential, industrial and institutional districts. Planning Board work sessions on the plan will extend through summer 2016.

Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan is being refined in spring 2016 through Planning Board work sessions focused on its specific land use, environmental, transportation and other recommendations.

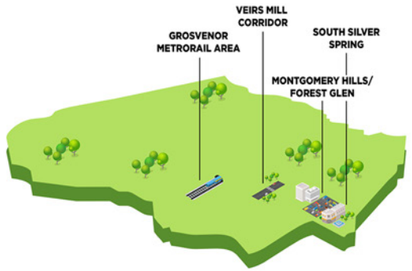
Rock Spring Master Plan identifies opportunities to reinvigorate a suburban office park. Planners are examining new uses, including residential development, public spaces, pedestrian and transportation connectivity.

White Flint 2 Sector Plan aims to close the gap between the 2010 White Flint and Twinbrook Sector Plans, and pending City of Rockville plan for Rockville Pike with new land use, zoning and transportation strategies.

MARC Rail Communities Plan focuses on improving the transit station areas in Boyds and Germantown in ways sensitive to these historic places. Public design workshops held in March 2015 helped to identify community concerns.

Bicycle Master Plan will propose a Countywide network of high-quality bikeways, some separated from vehicular traffic. An advisory group, interactive feedback maps and community meetings are helping to guide the plan.

Proposed Plans



South Silver Spring Small Area Plan will study ways of creating a gateway experience into Montgomery County and DC by improving accessibility to local businesses and institutions, and spurring new mixed-use and transit-oriented development.

Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen Sector Plan will focus on the commercial area located along Georgia Avenue between 16th Street and Capital Beltway. Planners will work with stakeholders to study the streetscape environment and make recommendations for zoning and redevelopment.

Veirs Mill Corridor Small Area Plan will evaluate the routes and activity centers between the Wheaton and Rockville Metrorail stations. Goals are to strengthen access to proposed bus rapid transit, pedestrian connectivity and redevelopment opportunities.

Grosvenor Metrorail Area Minor Master Plan will determine the appropriate strategies for transforming the Metro station parking lot and nearby properties into a mixed-use neighborhood.

CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL USAGE

USAGE FOR FEBRUARY 2015 TO FEBRUARY 2016

BETHESDA COUNTER (COUNTER #1)

PEDESTRIANS	CYCLISTS
467,728	323,271

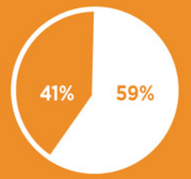
791,000 TOTAL USERS

DALECARLIA TUNNEL COUNTER (COUNTER #2)

PEDESTRIANS	CYCLISTS
157,160	487,372

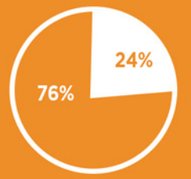
644,532 TOTAL USERS

AVERAGE DAILY USERS



- PEDESTRIANS (1,278)
- CYCLISTS (883)

AVERAGE DAILY USERS



- PEDESTRIANS (429)
- CYCLISTS (1,332)

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

PARKS + PLANNING AT TASTE OF WHEATON

The Parks and Planning Departments are **broadening public participation** in our plans and projects through **new digital tools, social media and community workshops**. This outreach includes interactive maps, allowing the public to comment and record concerns about specific planning issues.

We are **improving accessibility for the disabled** and **diversifying athletic fields and park activities**.

The Planning Board is touring County neighborhoods to gain a better understanding of recent plans and their influence on changing communities.

BROADENING PUBLIC OUTREACH

Diversity helps to shape our parks, facilities and programs, resulting in a park system that meets the needs of all citizens. To effectively reach and engage with new and diverse audiences, we have created a department-wide outreach strategy that encourages people of all backgrounds to take an active role in the park planning and development process.

As part of this process, we have formalized how outreach is executed, created tiered levels of outreach for the 300+ projects taking place in parks at any given time and conducted broad outreach campaigns.

OUTREACH FOR 300+ PARKS PROJECTS

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

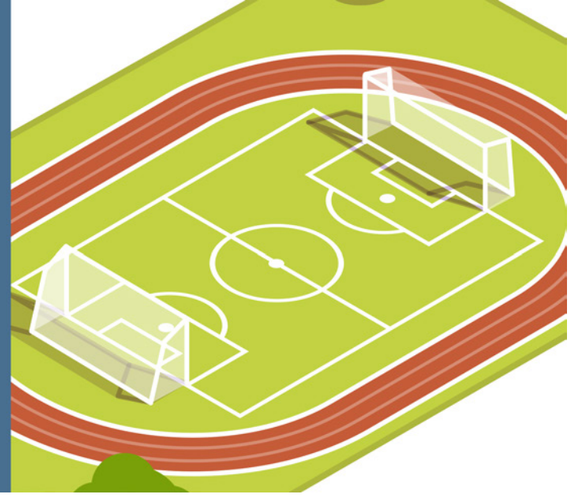
Embracing people of all abilities to participate in programs and events is important to creating a healthy community. To meet this goal, we continue toward:

- Making physical improvements to amenities, such as athletic fields, tennis courts and playgrounds.
- Making improvements to unique amenities, such as Brookside Gardens and our historic buildings.

DIVERSIFYING ATHLETIC FIELDS

Montgomery Parks has more than 290 athletic fields; however, location and field type do not always allow our customers the accessibility and availability they need. In order to improve capacity and grow user satisfaction, staff continuously works to enhance the quality, safety, capacity and diversity of our fields.

We are working on a comprehensive field condition assessment for park and school fields, and continue to invest in field-related improvements to improve quality. We are adding fields and working to improve capacity, expanding our field maintenance program with the Montgomery County Public School system and identifying future field needs through the PROS Plan.



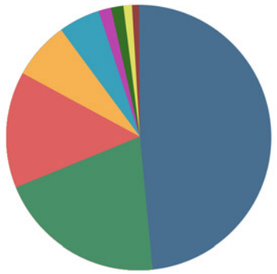
ADA OFFICE STATISTICS

Service and Participant Logistics
Varying degrees of modifications for individuals with disabilities have been coordinated by the Program Access Office:

- Thirty-three (33) individuals with disabilities were paired with trained support staff or a companion in programs and day camps
- Thirty (30) individuals with disabilities required indirect support. Program staff at location sites provide modification as needed;

Highlights/Significant Events
The Program Access Office staff has developed several training modules, including the ADA and Program Access for internal career staff. Since November 2015, 500 staff have been trained in this important training module.

Individuals With Disabilities Who Attended Programs & Events



- **48%**: ADHD, ADD or Other Attention Disabilities
- **20%**: Mulitple Disabilities*
- **14%**: Austism Spectrum
- **7%**: Seizures / Epilepsy
- **5%**: Developmental Disabilities
- **2%**: Emotional / Behavioral
- **2%**: Physical Disabilities
- **1%**: Blind / Low Vision, Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- **1%**: Speech

* This category was very broad as it included individuals with a wide range of social-emotional disabilities, physical disabilities, cognitive disabilities and social disabilities.

NEW DIGITAL TOOLS + OUTREACH

Involving the diverse population of Montgomery County in our planning efforts has led us to create new types of digital engagement over the past six months, including:

- **Interactive Cycling Concerns Map** allows users to record concerns over difficult crossings, excessive speed, insufficient bike parking, poor pavement and connections, and more. These comments will guide planners during their work on the Bicycle Master Plan. **mcatlas.org/cyclingconcerns**
- **Locally Designated Historic African American Sites and Places Map** uses GIS technology to present information and photos of 24 buildings and places in Montgomery County. The map will be expanded over time to include additional culturally significant African American sites, as determined by County residents. **mcatlas.org/blackhistorymap**
- **Bicycle Stress Map** reveals the impediments to bicycling in the County for residents who are interested in bicycling more, but concerned for their safety. Planning staff evaluated nearly 4,000 miles of roads and trails in the County to determine the levels of stress. **mcatlas.org/bikestress**
- **MARC Rail Communities Map** records ideas about the future of areas around the train stations in Boyds and Germantown. Participants can comment about connections, placemaking and other topics to help the MARC Rail Communities Plan. **mcatlas.org/marc**
- **Energy Efficient Buildings Website** showcases 10 eco-friendly buildings in Montgomery County to emphasize the connection between design excellence and sustainable architecture.
- **Design Excellence Award Website** describes each winning project to provide more information about this program. Comments from the awards jury reveal the reasons for their choices.

BICYCLE MASTER PLAN CYCLING CONCERNS MAP

SOCIAL MEDIA + OUTREACH STATS

MONTGOMERY PARKS
MONTGOMERYPARKS.ORG

TOTAL WEB TRAFFIC *(JAN. 1-DEC. 31, 2015)*
1,657,502 Sessions | 973,502 Users | 3,455,771 Views

FACEBOOK.COM/MONTGOMERYPARKS
16,541 Total Likes *(AS OF MARCH 2016)*

@MONTGOMERYPARKS
4,646 Total Followers *(AS OF MARCH 2016)*

8,673 CUSTOMER CALLS + EMAILS
To The Park Information + Customer Service Desk *(JAN.-DEC. 2015)*

MONTGOMERY PLANNING
MONTGOMERYPLANNING.ORG

TOTAL WEB TRAFFIC *(JAN. 1-DEC. 31, 2015)*
318,430 Visitors | 790,712 Pageviews

FACEBOOK.COM/MONTGOMERYPLANNING
837 Total Likes *(AS OF MARCH 2016)*

@MONTGOMERYPLANS
1,064 Total Followers *(AS OF MARCH 2016)*

YOUTUBE.COM/MONTGOMERYPLANNING
13,073 Views *(AS OF MARCH 2016)*

8,362 Park Permits issued/ processed (not including Field Permits) from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

210 permits issued for special events in parks (including sports tournments) from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

CRICKET PLAYED ON PARKS FIELD

PLANNING BOARD CONNECTS WITH COMMUNUNITIES

Over the past six months, the Planning Board has toured areas of the County to gain a firsthand understanding of how recent plans have the potential to change specific communities.

- Visits to Kensington, Lyttonsville, Montgomery Village and Westbard.
- Public hearings for the Montgomery Village Master Plan were held in December 2015 at the Council Office Building in Rockville to be closer to residents.

THANK YOU BOARD MEMBER AMY PRESLEY

Board member Amy Presley's tenure ends in June 2016 after eight years on the Planning Board.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS MARYE WELLS-HARLEY, NORMAN DREYFUSS, NATALI FANI-GONZALEZ AND CHAIR CASEY ANDERSON

DOWNTOWN SILVER SPRING TOUR

STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

DOWNTOWN SILVER SPRING FOUNTAIN

The Parks and Planning Departments are updating practices and regulations to help attract new residents and businesses to Montgomery County. Our parks alone draw thousands of visitors, who are attracted to historic sites and volunteer-led programs as much as nature.

Efforts to strengthen our competitiveness in the region include **updating the Subdivision Staging Policy and researching employment, retail and housing trends** to inform plans and programs.

Development is keeping pace. Regulatory statistics show that the number of preliminary plans are projected to be higher in fiscal year 2016 and will take 180 days of staff time to review, from acceptance to Planning Board approval.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
RESEARCH + STUDIES

RENTAL HOUSING STUDY

A study by Montgomery Planning and County Department of Housing and Community Affairs to determine factors contributing to increasing housing costs and identify best practices for preserving the existing affordable rental housing stock.

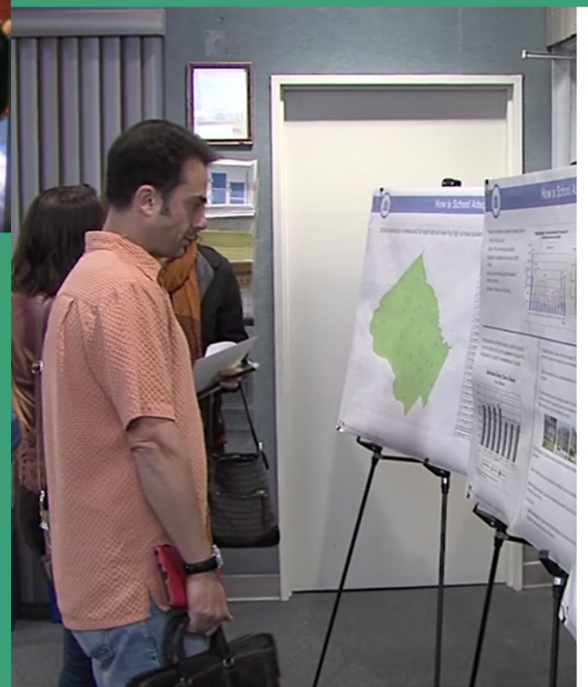
EVOLVING RETAIL TRENDS

Study that will address market forces, changing store locations and designs in response to the ecommerce explosion and other influences as well as the current state of retail conditions in Montgomery County.

STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

In-depth assessment of tools and strategies to increase the County's ability to compete for enterprises, jobs and revenues in key sectors of the region's economy.

montgomeryplanning.org/research



MANAGING GROWTH + INFRASTRUCTURE

UPDATE TO SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Chapter 50 of the Montgomery County Code that governs the subdivision of County land has been rewritten in response to the new Zoning Ordinance.

- Simplifies the process for certain types of subdivision plans that will not have to be presented to the Planning Board.
- Ensures subdivision application reviews follow the Zoning Ordinance time frame of 120 days and limits record plat application review to 90 days.

UPDATE TO SUBDIVISION STAGING POLICY

Planning staff is advancing new ideas in transportation and school capacity for the new Subdivision Staging Policy regulations. Schedule:

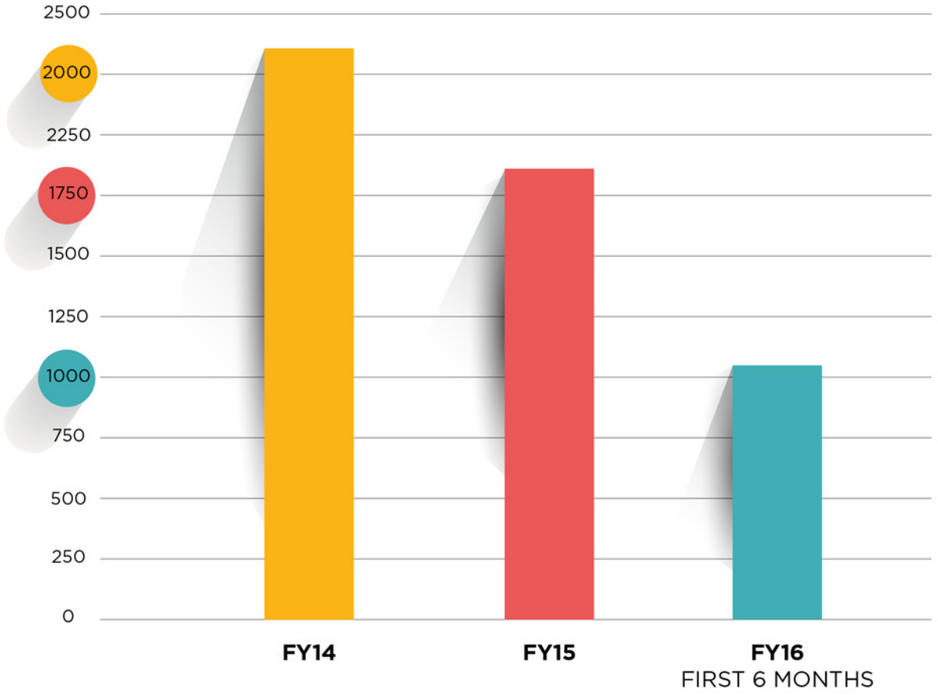
MAY 2016
PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT COMPLETE

JULY 2016
PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSIONS END

AUGUST 2016
TRANSMITTAL TO COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULATORY STATISTICS

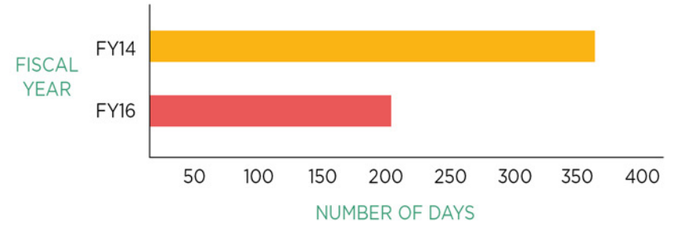
ALL PLAN TYPES ACCEPTED BY FISCAL YEAR



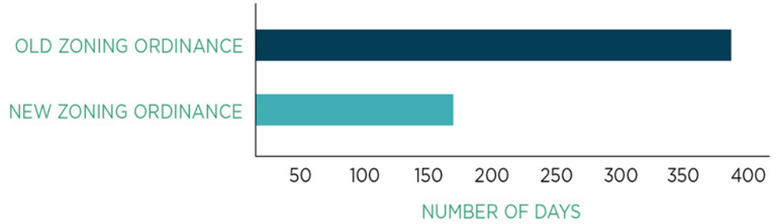
- **Reviewing an increasing number of applications submitted for preliminary plans and site plans:** In FY16, new preliminary subdivision and site plans are projected to be more numerous than in FY14 and FY15. If the pace of submissions continues, the number of applications in FY16 will exceed those submitted in each of the previous three years.

- **Improving the record plat review process:** Since July 2014, all new record plats have been submitted and reviewed electronically, resulting in a decrease in approval times.

  The average review time for record plats during the first six months of FY16 was 207 days, compared to 365 days in FY14.



- **Making the site plan review process more efficient:** The average review times for new site plans submitted under the new County Zoning Ordinance is 168 days, compared to 389 days for those submitted and reviewed under the old Zoning Ordinance.



EDUCATIONAL, HEALTHY + ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

600,000 NATURE CENTER + BROOKSIDE GARDEN VISITORS

12,000 STUDENTS A YEAR

520,388 ICE RINK VISITORS

117,283 TENNIS VISITORS

Montgomery Parks offers a variety of programs and places where residents can connect to nature and participate in active, educational and healthy activities.

From nature and gardening programs to ice skating and tennis, from school programming to summer camps and “park play days,” we connect people with fun, memorable things to do and to learn about.

There are many things to do, places to visit and activities to try in our parks and facilities.

BETHESDA ROW

HISTORY IN THE PARKS

History comes alive in Montgomery Parks! Visitors come from Montgomery County and surrounding jurisdictions to learn about our country's history, culture and the complexity of our shared story. Montgomery Parks' historic sites offer unique opportunities, including the Underground Railroad Experience, guided tours at Josiah Henson Park, Kingsley Schoolhouse and Oakley Cabin, and school and group tours at multiple sites. The addition of the distinctive visitor's center at Woodlawn Cultural Park creates additional heritage tourism, educates visitors about Montgomery County's Quaker and agriculture heritage, and ties together our African American public history trilogy of slavery, emancipation and reconstruction.

WOODLAWN STONE BARN

PROTECTING HISTORIC + NATURAL RESOURCES

From midcentury modern subdivisions to African American churches, the historic resources of the County have been documented and mapped over the past six months to raise awareness of our rich heritage. Recent Sector Plans for Downtown Bethesda and Westbard recommend a diverse range of green spaces and parks to help revitalize these aging centers.

- View the Locally Designated Historic African American Sites and Places Map online at **mcatlas.org/blackhistorymap**
- Learn more about the Montgomery Modern Initiative and architectural historian Clare Lise Kelly's book *Montgomery Modern: Modern Architecture in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1979,* at **montgomeryplanning.org/montgomerymodern**

WOODLAWN MANOR CULTURAL PARK

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

Annually, Montgomery Parks works with an estimated 11,600 volunteers who donate more than 75,000 hours of service to the Department in a variety of ways, including:

- Park and stream clean-ups.
- Trail work.
- Special events.
- Nature and gardening programs.
- Public safety.
- Historic interpretation.

Since 1996, our volunteers have contributed **more than 1,070,693 hours of service** – a total that's **valued at more than $24 million**.

129,736 POUNDS OF TRASH (FY15) + **22,675** POUNDS OF RECYCLABLES (FY15) + **75,000** HOURS VOLUNTEERED

=

VALUE OF $1,730,000 OF LABOR IN FY15

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK POLICE

CONNECT WITH US

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