

COUNTYWIDE PLANNING DIVISION

Jeff Zyontz, Chief

Countywide analytic and quantitative assessments are provided through six major programs:

- **Environmental Planning**
- **Transportation Planning**
- **Development Review Support**
- **Community-Based Planning Support**
- **Historic Preservation**
- **Park Planning and Resource Analysis**

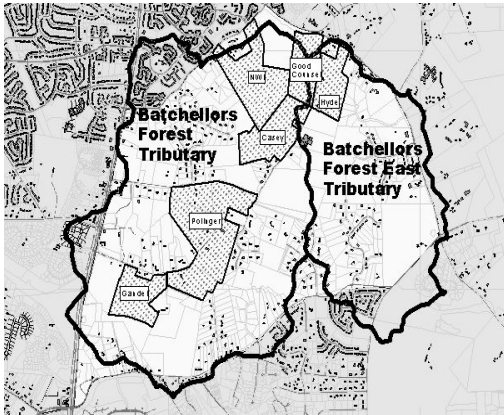
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

- **Intercounty Connector Environmental Impact Study (EIS)** – Considerable staff effort has been directed to participation in the EIS including monthly meetings with the State Highway Administration and various technical group meetings to provide expertise in determining proper stream crossings, identifying potential mitigation and stewardship sites, and evaluating impacts to park resources. Future efforts will include providing the Planning Board with sufficient information to properly comment on the draft EIS and make decisions on park resource replacement and compensation.
- **Environmental Policy** – Staff have continued to participate in the development of the county's *Environmental Policy* and in development of the Environmental Policy Task Force report. Future efforts will include developing action plans identifying current and future M-NCPPC activities for compliance with the *Environmental Policy* and recommendations identified in the Environmental Policy Task Force report.
- **Green Buildings** - Staff have been actively promoting and encouraging the development of green buildings for M-NCPPC facilities and for the private sector, including presentations to the Planning Board and the County Council's Transportation and Environment Committee on private sector incentives for green buildings. Future efforts will include developing and organizing an education forum with the Maryland-National Capital Building Industry Association, working with other county agencies, the building association, and the environmental community in developing a comprehensive green building policy/plan for Montgomery County.
- **Special Protection Area and Environmental Overlay Zone for Upper Rock Creek** – Adaptation of the overlay zone from the Upper Paint Branch to conditions in Upper Rock Creek required a significant level of effort from staff involved in development review and legal issues. A zoning text amendment for private institutional facilities in large-lot zones was transmitted to the County Council in the last reporting period.

COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING SUPPORT

- **Bethesda Comprehensive Local Area Transportation Review** – This study is recommended in the 1994 Bethesda Sector Plan as a means to identify transportation improvements and programs to be developed during Stage II of the implementation plan.

The staff technical findings and recommendation regarding Sector Plan staging presented to the Planning Board in April 2004.



- **Olney Master Plan** – Staff prepared extensive background information for the Planning Board’s analysis of the protection of water quality and forest resources in the Southeast quadrant. The Board also considered expansion of the Special Protection Area to the Olney portion of the Upper Rock Creek watershed.
- **Damascus Master Plan:** This plan includes a major effort to consolidate and minimize impacts to the Patuxent Drinking Water Reservoir watershed by reinforcing the viability of the town center.
- **Urban Environmental Issues:** Staff developed a new approach to “green urbanism” that will be used in the Twinbrook master plan and subsequent plans for urban areas and town centers. The approach includes documenting resources lost to previous development and working with planners, residents, developers and county agencies to restore green corridors, reduce urban heat islands, incorporate green technology and improve the quality of life for urban residents.
- **Transportation Facility Planning for Midcounty Highway:** The DPWT study of Midcounty Highway Extended will address extensive environmental impacts both in and outside parkland. Environmental Planning staff is coordinating significant departmental efforts to study the impacts and locate an alignment that minimizes parkland impacts.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW SUPPORT

- **Forest Conservation Implementation** – The continuing implementation of the forest conservation law has stressed current staff resources in many ways. Issues such as conservation easements on private lots and long-term monitoring to assure proper implementation of forestation projects, stretch project involvement many years past the final approval of a forest conservation plan. Current new reviews are increasing as well, with a 45% increase in the number of NRI/FSD reviews over the same six-month period last year. Further, many “exempt” plans that require tree save as a condition of exemption often add significantly to review time, particularly on infill properties in down county.
- **Special Protection Area Compliance** – The addition of the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area (SPA) as the fourth SPA in the county will add to the review time involved in affected properties, particularly those subject to review and implementation of the 10% imperviousness cap. All SPA plans require additional review elements beyond the norm, including: participation in required SPA pre-application meetings; review, tracking, and enforcement for compliance with imperviousness limits; preparation of separate staff reports; and packaging county DPS and staff SPA water quality plan review and recommendations on all mandatory referrals, special exceptions and zoning cases requiring water quality plans.

- **Golf Communities** – Staff is currently providing a significant level of effort to review both the Fairland and Indian Springs Golf communities. Each poses significant issues with forest preservation, wetland protection and the balance of recreation and residential uses with natural resource protection.
- **Local Area Transportation Review Guidelines (LATR)** – Traffic counts from all traffic studies are now being received in digital format and entered into our intersection database. The LATR Guidelines have been revised to reflect changes approved by the County Council. The guidelines became effective on July 1, 2004.
- **Plans Reviewed** – Several large proposed projects received staff attention over the reporting period. Examples of projects where staff played significant roles in the review include: Silver Spring Transit Center, West Park Tech Center, FDA at White Oak, Fortune Parc, Cabin Branch, and several residential and commercial projects in the Silver Spring CBD.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

- **Project and Facility Planning Studies** – Significant staff work is involved with participating in the many Project and Facility Planning studies underway by MDOT and DPW&T. These studies include key county locations where roadway improvements, new transitways, and new interchanges are master planned and needed. In addition to providing transportation technical support, staff is working as part of the teams to assure that Planning Board and County Council perspectives are reflected in the designs.
- **Mandatory Referrals** – Balancing objectives of vehicle mobility, pedestrian and bikeway accommodation, community and environmental impacts and safety have been challenging. Several of these projects are now also subject to the County's Forest Conservation law and requires Planning Board approval of the Forest Conservation Plan.
- **Montgomery County Annual Development Approval and Congestion (ADAC) Report** – This Report, requested by the County Council during the 2003-05 Annual Growth Policy (AGP) Policy Element, has been completed by staff. This document, which reports on countywide transportation system congestion using data and analysis available from current sources, is the first one of its kind. It gives the Planning Board and County Council information useful for guiding upcoming transportation capital programs. In addition, the report provides guidance on where additional data collection and analysis resources can best be targeted.
- **Countywide Bikeway Functional Master Plan, Planning Board (Final) Draft** – This document was approved by the Planning Board on April 22 and is now before the County Council. The Master Plan of Highways map update is completed, incorporating the recent adoption by the Council of the Master Plan of Highways (transportation) Amendment.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Some of the larger projects during this period include:

- completion of the HPC review of a major amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* to consider historic designation of resources in the Damascus/Goshen area,

- completion of an important oral history project and historical study about the Camp Meeting tradition in Montgomery County;
- work on Park-owned historic sites, including completion of the first phase of renovation at the Joseph White House, initiation of stabilization work at the Woodlawn Barn, and completion of renovation at the Meadowbrook Stables Farrier Shed;
- review of 104 Historic Preservation Property Tax Credit applications;
- review of a very large number of Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) applications; and
- acceptance of a new site and new program to the National Park Services' National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

New Initiatives

- A number of issues have arisen regarding procedures for adding properties to the *Locational Atlas*, enforcement provisions for HAWP violations, and refining the easement donation process. Because of this, it is appropriate to consider reviewing the Historic Preservation Ordinance in these specific areas and to propose revisions to the law that will make it more efficient and understandable. Proposed revisions to the law will be submitted to the County Council this winter.
- A Strategic Plan for Management of MNCPPC Historic Properties is being developed and will be completed for Planning Board review by Spring 2005.

PARK PLANNING AND RESOURCE ANALYSIS

Aquatic Resources

- With the aid of volunteers, PPRA continues its monitoring program in support of the County-wide Stream Protection Strategy, area master plans, park master plans, and park management plans, completing macro-invertebrate collections and fish sampling. 2004 baseline monitoring is being conducted in Little Paint Branch, Paint Branch, and Northwest Branch; Little Paint Branch stations are also providing pre-construction data for the Fairland Golf Course project. Monitoring in the Seneca Creek watershed in conjunction with the development of the South Germantown Recreational Park Continues. Staff has also done targeted monitoring in support of area master plans is being done in the Upper Patuxent River and Gunners Branch watersheds.
- PPRA served as the department of Park and Planning's lead staff on six major interagency watershed restoration projects.

Legacy Open Space

- Completed acquisition of two heritage sites and one greenway connection site for a total of 42 acres of new parkland.
- Continued negotiations on several additional parcels.
- Added four new sites to Legacy Open Space as a result of a biannual search.

Park Planning and Design

- Phase I of the 2005 PROS Plan (Land Preservation Plan) has been initiated.
- Background materials for the Planning Board worksession on Public Hearing Draft Blockhouse Point Master Plan have been completed.
- Staff continued work on preparing park concept designs for the following new parks in Clarksburg: Kings Local Park, Clarksburg Village Neighborhood Park, Greenway Village Neighborhood Conservation Area, Greenway Village Local Park, Cabin Branch Local Park, Clarksburg Village Local Park, Clarksburg Greenway Gateway Commons Special Park, and two un-named stream valley parks.
- The review of park issues (*e.g.*, park dedication, trail easements, design and construction of park amenities) for approximately 100 plans in the development review process and 25 mandatory referral projects was completed in this reporting period.
- Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan was begun.

Trail Planning and Natural Surface Trail Implementation

- Staff prepared for Planning Board review and approval an Issues and Outreach Report for Rachel Carson Greenway Trail Study (approved by Board July, 2004) and completed the Trail Concept Plan for the Fairland Recreational Park as part of staff review of the Fairland Golf Course Community site plan.
- Volunteers who collectively worked 853 hours to construct and improve natural surface trails were supervised by PPRA staff.
- Maps in English and Spanish for Heart Smart Trail at Brookside Gardens (opened June 2004) were completed in this reporting period.