



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

MCPB Item 3

Date: 03 / 07 / 2019

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 27, 2019

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *MFR*  
Mitra Pedoeem, Deputy Director, Administration *Mitra Pedoeem*  
John Nissel, Deputy Director, Operations *JN*  
Patricia McManus, Acting Division Chief, Park Development Division (PDD) *PM*

**FROM:** Brenda Sandberg, Real Estate Management Supervisor, PDD *BES*  
Joshua Kaye, Real Estate Manager, PDD *JK*

**SUBJECT:** Land Acquisition Recommendation: Westbard Urban Recreational Park

- 1) River Road Associates, L.P. property  
5200 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817  
65,796 square feet, more or less, improved
- 2) Frederick Burrows Norris Revocable Trust property  
5200 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817  
4,943 square feet, more or less, improved

---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff requests the following two actions by the Montgomery County Planning Board:

- 1) Approve Resolution 19-22 to acquire the River Road Associates L.P. property as a portion of the future Westbard Urban Recreational Park for a negotiated purchase price of \$7,500,000 to be funded with grant money from Maryland's Program Open Space (POS).
- 2) Approve Resolution 19-21 to acquire the Frederick Burrows Norris Revocable Trust property as a portion of the future Westbard Urban Recreational Park for a negotiated purchase price of \$1,000,000 to be funded with grant money from Maryland's Program Open Space (POS).

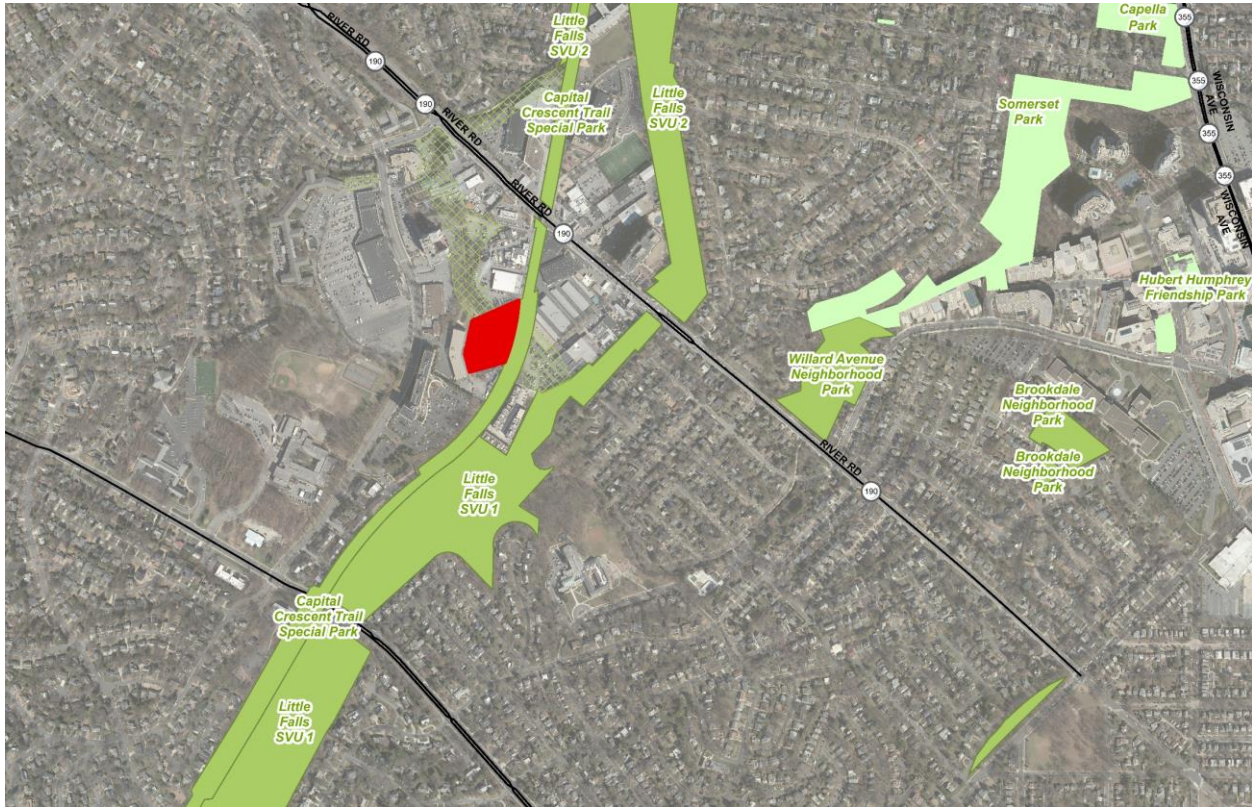
The properties are outlined in red on Figure 2 and Resolutions 19-21 and 19-22 are attached.

**SUMMARY**

These two properties are recommended as the first purchases to create the future Westbard Countywide Urban Recreational Park as envisioned in the Westbard Sector Plan. These properties (1.6 acres in total) are the first critical parcels of this recreational resource located adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail in the growing community of Westbard. Benefits of the future park include providing active recreation facilities,

connectivity for trail users and the local community, and a gateway to the Willett Branch Greenway that will include trails, landscaping, and stream naturalization to create the unique identifying feature of the changing Westbard area.

Figure 1: Proposed Westbard Urban Recreational Park location in the Westbard Sector Plan area



## PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS

### ***River Road Associates, L.P. Property***

The River Road Associates, L.P. property (“River Road Associates”) consists of 65,796 square feet of land, more or less, improved. The subject property, zoned IM-2.5, is located in an industrial and commercial area of Westbard south of River Road on the west side of the Capital Crescent Trail. The property address is 5200 River Road and is legally described as Parcel 404 in a subdivision known as Friendship. The property includes several concrete and metal warehouse buildings from the 1950’s currently occupied by several light industrial and commercial businesses.

The property directly adjoins the Capital Crescent Trail just south of River Road. The site is completely covered with impervious surfaces consisting of pavement surrounding two banks of attached warehouse buildings. The land has moderately sloping topography that slopes northeast to the edge of the currently channelized Willett Branch, a tributary to the Little Falls Watershed. Public water and sewer is available. The owner is a willing seller and the property is being acquired through negotiation, in fee simple, with a five-year reservation period.

Figure 2. River Road Associates and Norris Trust parcels adjacent to Capital Crescent Trail



**Frederick Burrows Norris Revocable Trust Property**

The Frederick Burrows Norris Revocable Trust property (“Norris Trust”) consists of 4,943 square feet of land, more or less, improved. The subject property, zoned IM-2.5, is located in an industrial and commercial area of Westbard south of River Road on the west side of the Capital Crescent Trail. The property is surrounded completely by the River Road Associates property. The property address is 5200 River Road, the same as for River Road Associates, and is legally described as Parcel 354. The property is completely impervious, primarily consisting of a single concrete warehouse building currently occupied by a commercial business. The existing structure is attached to a commercial building located on the River Road Associates property.

The owner is a willing seller and the property is being acquired through negotiation in fee simple.

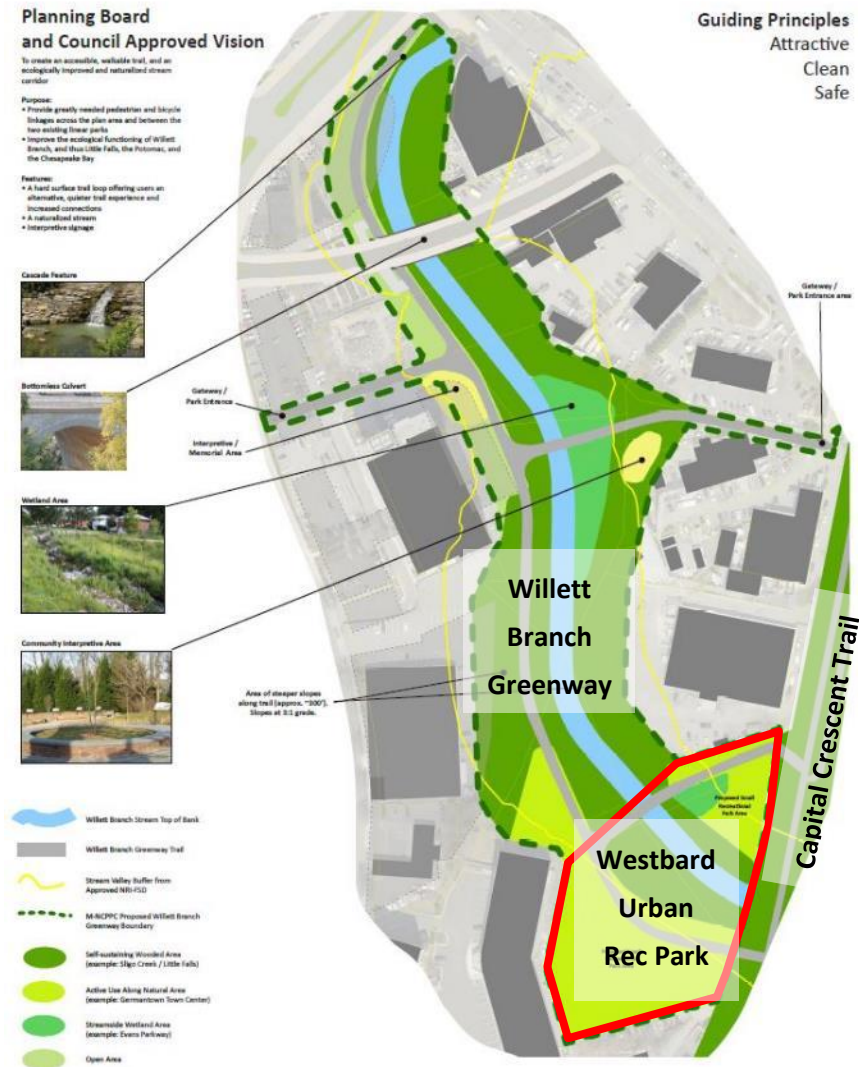
**MASTER PLAN AND POLICY RATIONALE**

These properties are identified as an important new park site that supports the goals and objectives in many adopted policies and master plans, including the *2016 Westbard Sector Plan*, *Vision 2030 Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation*, *2017 PROS Plan*, *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan*, and the recently adopted *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan*. All these planning documents highlight the



importance of parks and open space needs for urban communities to promote healthy living through diverse recreation and leisure activities. The acquisition of the River Road Associates and Norris Trust properties is the first step in implementing the vision and goals in these plans as described below.

Figure 3: Willett Branch Greenway and Westbard Urban Recreational Park, Master Plan Vision



**Westbard Sector Plan, 2016**

One of the core park and open space recommendations in this recent sector plan is to create a Countywide Urban Recreational Park at the intersection of the Willett Branch and the Capital Crescent Trail. The park will serve as a gateway to the naturalized Willett Branch Urban Greenway and a destination along the Capital Crescent Trail. The proposed park will be designed for active recreation to serve the residents and workers from the surrounding neighborhoods and may include facilities such as sport courts, skate spots, playgrounds, lawn areas, or other recreation facilities. Public input during the week-long Westbard charrette and community meetings frequently mentioned the need for “more active parks”, including

requests for skate parks, dog parks and community open space. A major goal for this district of the Westbard Sector Plan is the purchase of these properties to create this recreational park.

***Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan***

Within the Westbard Sector Plan, this proposed Countywide Urban Recreational Park and the Willett Branch Greenway were designated as Urban Open Space and Greenway Connection resources in the *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan* (2001). The creation of this recreational park meets several Legacy Open Space criteria, including increasing access to open space in the growing Westbard community and providing interconnectivity of the urban green infrastructure between one of the most important trail corridors in the County and the growing Westbard community.

***Vision 2030, 2017 PROS Plan, and Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan***

These three policy documents include broad policy direction and specific recommendations that support this acquisition. The *Vision 2030 Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation* (2010) prioritized planning to meet the increasing demands of a growing population that will be concentrated in the urban areas of the central and southern part of the County. This strategic plan emphasized that adequate green space and parks and recreation amenities in these urbanized areas is essential to maintaining the high quality of life that is enjoyed by residents in Montgomery County.

The *2017 PROS Plan* outlines strategies for providing a variety of parks and recreation facilities that address current needs and emerging trends and sharpens the focus on addressing park needs in our most dense communities. Most recently, the *Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan* (2018) directed urban park efforts toward creating parks and public spaces within walking distance so people can gather, play and be in touch with the outdoors in our urbanizing communities. The proposed Westbard Urban Recreational Park will meet these needs by providing a variety of amenities on a relatively small footprint in the changing Westbard community.

**Future Westbard Urban Recreational Park**

Three parcels need to be acquired to create this new Urban Recreational Park that will be approximately 2.4 acres in size: River Road Associates, Norris Trust, and Schnabel Foundation (refer to Figure 4). These two acquisitions (Norris Trust and River Road Associates) will create approximately 1.6 acres of new parkland, about two-thirds of the future park. Real Estate Management staff will next address their efforts towards acquisition of the Schnabel Foundation parcel to complete the land acquisition necessary for the recreational park.

As described in the Westbard Sector Plan, this park will serve two main purposes. First, it will serve as a gateway to the Willett Branch Greenway, linking the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) with the Greenway's naturalized stream and landscaping, recreation trail, and existing and new developments within Westbard. The second purpose is to provide additional recreation amenities to serve the local community, users of the CCT and other visitors from outside the immediate area. Potential amenities could include a skate spot, multi-age play area, fitness equipment, and open unprogrammed lawn areas; the actual park design will be determined during the Facility Planning process with broad community input. Figure 5 illustrates a general vision of what the future park could look like.

Figure 4: Three Parcels Needed to Create Westbard Urban Recreational Park

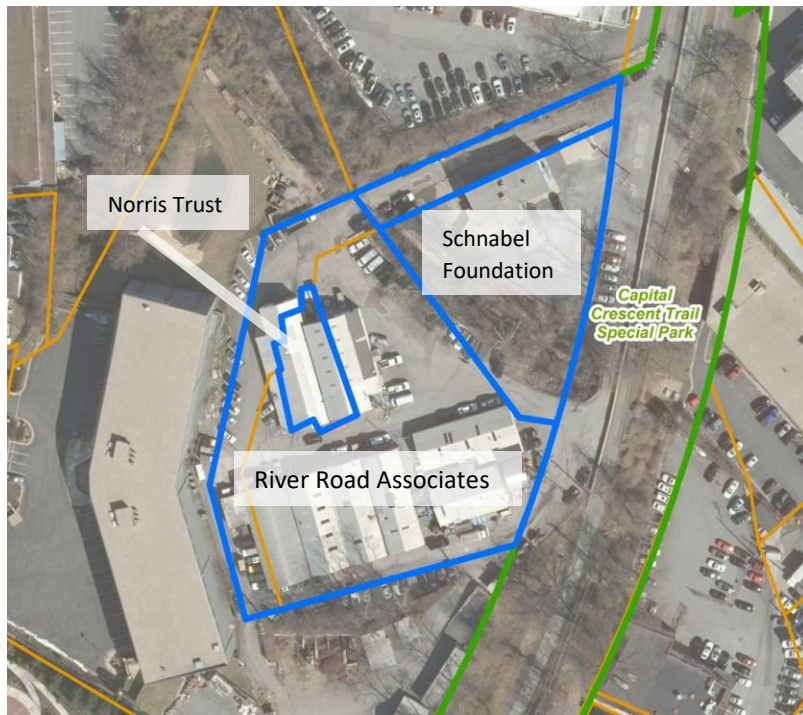


Figure 5: Concept Sketch, Westbard Urban Recreational Park and Willett Branch Greenway



## **Start Up Costs & Operating Budget Impact (OBI)**

Initial costs to turn this industrial site into a stable, grassed piece of land will be primarily borne by the seller of the River Road Associates property per the conditions in the purchase contract. If the costs to reach that condition exceed the estimated \$200,000, Legacy Open Space site improvement funds in the CIP can be used to complete conversion of the site into a safe interim condition. Removal of the structure on the Norris Trust parcel may also be funded with Legacy Open Space site improvement funds. OBI during the interim conditions phase will be minimal to maintain the site as unprogrammed open space and provide police monitoring, as necessary.

Costs to design and build a new park on these properties will be determined during the Facility Plan process and then requested in the capital budget. Estimates of the design and construction costs could vary significantly depending on the proposed amenities in the Park. For a frame of reference, development costs for similar parks in Montgomery County range from \$1.5 Million to \$3 Million per acre, suggesting a target range of \$3.6 Million to \$7.2 Million for the estimated 2.4-acre Westbard Urban Recreational Park. OBI for the ongoing management of this new park will also be variable and highly dependent on the final design for the site as determined during Facility Planning.

## **Conclusion**

Real Estate Management staff are pleased to bring these critical first two acquisitions to the Planning Board for approval to implement the parks vision in the Westbard Sector Plan.

### **Attachments:**

- A: Resolution #19-22: River Road Associates
- B: Resolution #19-21: Norris Trust

CC: Bill Tyler  
Sean Harbaugh  
Richard Kharman  
Jai Cole  
Darryl McSwain  
Jim Poore  
Kristi Williams  
Shuchi Vera  
David Vismara  
Megan Chung  
Robert Kronenberg  
Michael Brown

**ATTACHMENT A**

MCPB

19-022

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“Commission”) is authorized by Md. Code Ann., Land Use, §17-101 (formerly Article 28, Section 5-101), to acquire, develop, maintain and operate a public park system within the Maryland-Washington Metropolitan District; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition is consistent with the recommendations in the July 2016 Approved and Adopted Westbard Sector Plan; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County, Maryland (the “County”), has appropriated certain funds from Maryland’s Program Open Space to fund the County’s FY-19 Non-Local Park Acquisition Program CIP; and

WHEREAS, the Commission identifies properties that are eligible for acquisition with funds from Program Open Space and recommends that the County acquire such properties with such funds; and

WHEREAS, Richard S. Cohen, Trustee of the Richard S. Cohen Revocable Trust and General Partner of RSC GP, LLC, Managing Member of River Road Associates, Limited Partnership, a Maryland limited partnership, owns certain property identified by Tax Account #07-00427341, containing 65,796 square feet, more or less, improved; (the “Property”), located at 5200 River Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20816, all of which lies within the Little Falls Watershed of the County and meets parkland acquisition criteria, for the purpose of creating a new urban recreational park in the Westbard area of Bethesda; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board on behalf of the Commission recommends that the County acquire the Property from River Road Associates, Limited Partnership, all as described above; and

WHEREAS, there are sufficient monies available in the County’s FY-19 Non-Local Park Acquisition Program CIP to pay for the acquisition of the Property.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Montgomery County Planning Board recommends that the County execute the Land Purchase Agreement, on such terms acceptable to the Commission, to acquire the Property from River Road Associates, Limited Partnership for the purchase price of Seven- Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$7,500,000) and other valuable consideration.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is to certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, with Chairman \_\_\_\_\_, Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ voting in favor of the motion, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, March 7, 2019 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Anderson, Chair  
Montgomery County Planning Board



**ATTACHMENT B**

MCPB

19-021

**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“Commission”) is authorized by Md. Code Ann., Land Use, §17-101 (formerly Article 28, Section 5-101), to acquire, develop, maintain and operate a public park system within the Maryland-Washington Metropolitan District; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition is consistent with the recommendations in the July 2016 Approved and Adopted Westbard Sector Plan; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County, Maryland (the “County”), has appropriated certain funds from Maryland’s Program Open Space to fund the County’s FY-19 Non-Local Park Acquisition Program CIP; and

WHEREAS, the Commission identifies properties that are eligible for acquisition with funds from Program Open Space and recommends that the County acquire such properties with such funds; and

WHEREAS, the Frederick Burrows Norris Revocable Trust, Frederick Burrow Norris, Trustee, owns certain property identified by Tax Account #07-00431206, containing 4,943 square feet, more or less, improved; (the “Property”), located at 5200 River Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20816, all of which lies within the Little Falls Watershed of the County and meets parkland acquisition criteria, for the purpose of creating a new urban recreational park in the Westbard area of Bethesda; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board on behalf of the Commission recommends that the County acquire the Property from the Frederick Burrows Norris Revocable Trust, all as described above; and

WHEREAS, there are sufficient monies available in the County’s FY-19 Non-Local Park Acquisition Program CIP to pay for the acquisition of the Property.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Montgomery County Planning Board recommends that the County execute the Land Purchase Agreement, on such terms acceptable to the Commission, to acquire the Property from Frederick Burrows Norris Revocable Trust for the purchase price of One- Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) and other valuable consideration.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is to certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, with Chairman \_\_\_\_\_, Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ voting in favor of the motion, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, March 7, 2019 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Anderson, Chair  
Montgomery County Planning Board