

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 24, 2017

TO: Ching-Fang Chen, Park Development Division

FROM: Dr. John E. Hench, Ph.D., Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PPSD)
Brooke Farquhar, Supervisor, Park and Trail Planning Section, PPSD
Rachel Davis Newhouse, Planner Coordinator, Park and Trail Planning, (PPSD)

SUBJECT: Preliminary Program of Requirements for Acorn Urban Park

The attached Preliminary Program of Requirements was requested by your Division to help guide the Facility Plan of Acorn Urban Park. Please feel free to discuss this with me as you move forward.

cc: Michael Ma, Acting Chief, Park Development Division
Tricia McManus, Supervisor, Park Development Division
Bill Tyler, Chief, Southern Parks
Jim Poore, Chief, Facilities Management
Tony DeVaul, Chief, Park Police

Preliminary Program of Requirements

ACORN URBAN PARK

8060 NEWELL STREET
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20910

▫ **Park Facility Recommendations Summary Background Information**

- *Basic Park Facts and Existing Conditions*
- *Existing and Future Park and Recreation Facilities Nearby*
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- *Population and Demographics*
- *Surveys of Park Use*
- *The park manager for this area has observed walkers, people sitting in the acorn gazebo and dog walkers in this park.*

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▫ **Policy Guidance**

▫ **Summary of Analysis of Needs for Components**



vicinity map

Park Facility Recommendations Summary

Based on the analysis of existing park facilities, surrounding conditions, policy guidance, and duplication of service, staff recommends the following facilities be included in the park:

1. **Retain existing historic setting for the silver spring and the acorn gazebo** – both are protected historic resources.
2. **Community Open Space** – Provide a level and un-programmed open area suitable for small gatherings, flexible programming and activation events. Open space materials should be designed to accommodate future park activities and general use. Impervious hardscape surfaces should be minimized wherever possible.
3. **Community Garden** - Provide compact or vertical community garden models that integrate with future urban park activities (if requested).
4. **Moveable site furnishings** – Provide seating and tables that can be put into grouping by park users for their specific uses such as group picnics, individual use or conversational groupings.
5. **Play elements** – Provide some way to play in the park. This could be by accommodating a play program, such as Pop-up Recess or something more permanent.

A detailed analysis of policy basis for recommended preliminary program of requirements is summarized later in this report.

Background Information

Basic Park Facts and Existing Conditions

Acorn Urban Park, acquired in 1942 and 1997, is a .12-acre urban park located at 8060 Newell Street, in the South Silver Spring revitalization district. Facilities at this park include an acorn shaped shelter with seating and the historic silver spring.

According to local history, in 1840 a newspaper publisher and friend of President Andrew Jackson, Francis Preston Blair, discovered the spring bubbling up through shiny mica sand. Two years later, Blair and his wife Eliza established a 300-acre summer estate called Silver Spring, on which he built an Acorn gazebo. The gazebo is a good example of rustic garden structures and furniture popular in the mid-1800s. The residence, located on Eastern Avenue, was demolished in 1955. His winter house, the Blair House, is now the President's official guest house in Washington, D.C.

The sentimental meaning of the acorn is that Blair proposed to his wife underneath an oak tree. The Acorn gazebo moved from its original place to its present location in 1955; it's now owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission.

Existing and Future Park and Recreation Facilities Nearby

Existing parks with ½ mile of Acorn Urban Park include Fenton Street Urban park, Jesup-Blair Local Park, Philadelphia Avenue Urban Park, Silver Spring Intermediate Neighborhood Park, Gene Lynch Urban Park, King Street Community Garden and the Silver Spring Transit Plaza Urban Park.

People who live within the ½ mile walking radius of Acorn Urban Park have the following public park amenities within a 10-20-minute walk: historic settings, seating, community gardens, flexible open space, playground, soccer field, basketball courts, tennis courts and the future civic event green at Gene Lynch Urban Park.

Other privately owned public amenities nearby include the plazas and seating areas across East West Highway and the proposed future dog parks, playgrounds and civic green at the Blair's development.

Silver Spring Place-making Discussions

During the Silver Spring Place-making effort, discussions about possible improvements to Acorn Park were expressed.

Some ideas/questions that have surfaced so far included:

- Work with MDOT to close off Newell Street on a temporary basis, re-stripe/re-pave and possibly expand the park:

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- Include programming that can support adjacent retail (the new outdoor bar) users, such as bocce ball or ping pong or corn hole.
- Light the acorn? It is currently hidden at night. It should be highlighted. Check with Cultural Resources.
- Maybe there is a way to have a symbolic water element feature representing the Silver Spring?

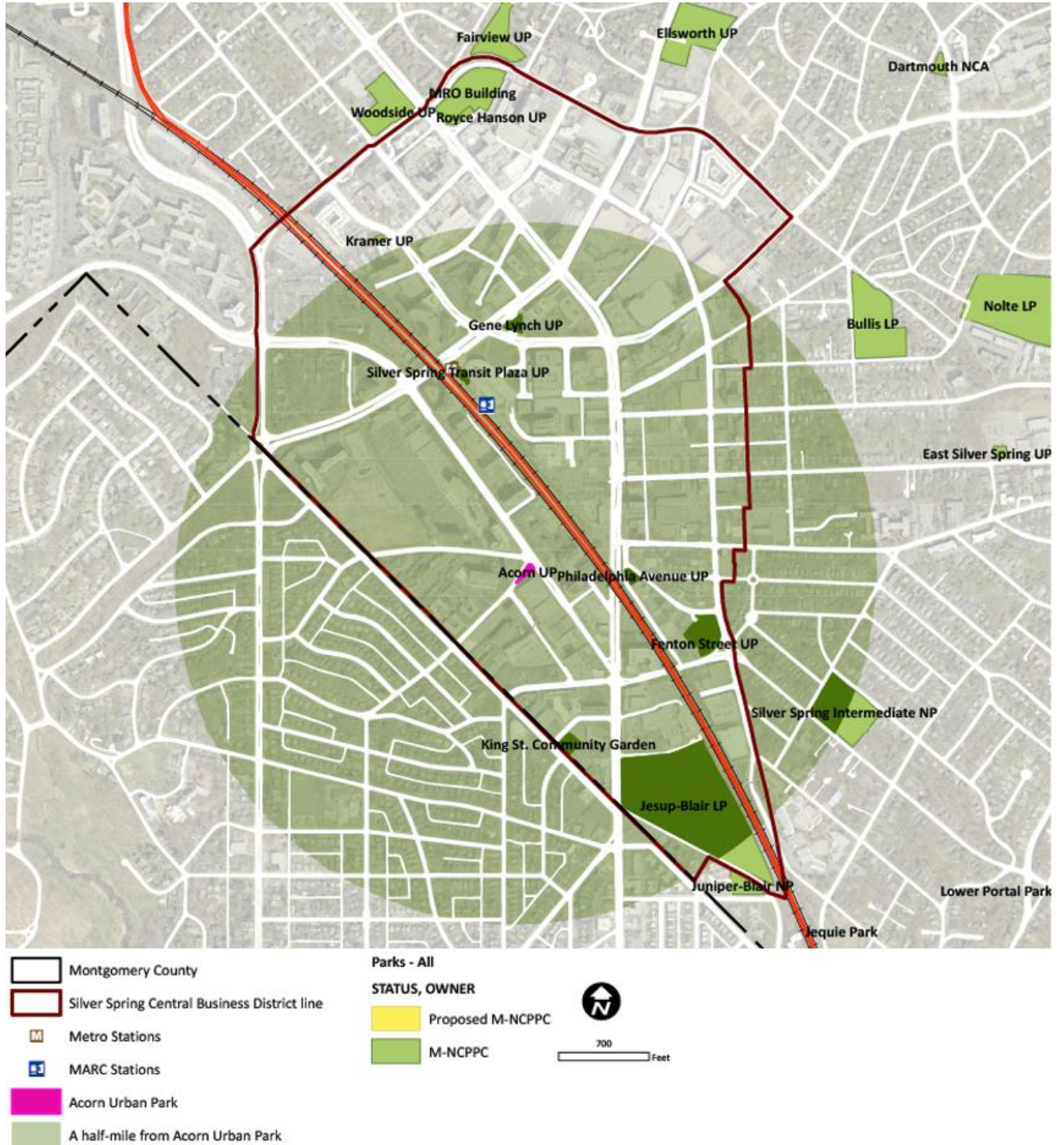
Population and Demographics

In 2010, in the areas surrounding the park, there was a total of 2,904 dwelling units with an estimated population of 4,569 people. Of that population, 4,019 were 18 years and older and 550 are under the age of 17.

Surveys of Park Use

The park manager for this area has observed walkers, people sitting in the acorn gazebo and dog walkers in this park.

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Above: Parks and facilities with 1/2 mile of Acorn Urban Park.

Policy Guidance

Area Master Plans, Park Master Plans, Vision 2030, PROS

<p>Needs analysis for facilities suitable in urban parks (Vision 2030 and PROS 2012)</p>	<p>Vision 2030 (2011):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Central (Highest Need Area): Maintain high Level of Service for Playgrounds, strategic potential to add Skate Parks, Community Gardens • Look for opportunities to add trails, dog parks <p>2012 PROS Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail links to bikeways to increase non-motorized mobility • Provide where level of service per population is lowest: Dog spots, community gardens, skate spots, community open space, urban wooded areas • Planning Area 36- Silver Spring: Athletic Fields – 1 Adult multi-purpose rectangular; Basketball Courts-0, Tennis Courts- 0, Playgrounds- 0
<p>Description and Appropriate Facilities for this Park Type</p>	<p>Urban Buffer Park (2012 PROS Plan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as green buffers at the edges of urban, high density development adjacent to lower density residential areas. They provide a green space within which residents and workers of an urban area may relax and recreate. Typical facilities (not all-inclusive) include landscaping, sitting/picnic areas, play equipment, courts, and shelters. Minimum approximate size is ¼ acre.
<p>2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan</p>	<p>General Urban Design Guidance</p> <p>Proposed projects should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an attractive pedestrian environment by creating a system of short blocks, and defining streets with building open spaces, and streetscaping at a human scale • Provide safe and attractive pedestrian connections between new development • Incorporate historic resources into new development whenever possible • Incorporate the principals of crime prevention through environmental design by integrating visibility, pedestrian activity and programming into project layouts. (p.73)

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Summary of Analysis of Needs for Components

The following chart summarizes, for each potential park component, the policy guidance from Master Plans and Sector Plans, the needs assessment from Vision 2030 and PROS 2012, findings from surveys and user counts, and staff recommendation for whether or not to include in the Preliminary Program of Requirements.

Facility	Existing	POLICY GUIDANCE					OTHER INPUT	Include in PPOR: Y / N / M and Qty.
		2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan	2020 Needs	2012 PROS Plan Needs	2010 Vision 2030 Importance per Survey / Recommendations	Park Survey Information	Staff Comments, Observations	
PROS COUNTYWIDE FACILITIES								
Urban Wooded Areas	0	-	NA	No number determined. Priority: urban parks in areas lacking nearby woodland	High / add strategically		The site is too small. Existing large trees on site should be preserved.	N
Skate Park	0	-	15	10 Urban model is 5-10k sf. Locate in proportion to population, near middle and high schools, where no service in area	Lowest / add strategically		The site is too small and close to library and homes for a dedicated facility. Consider skate-able elements integrated with the site (if requested by the community)	N
Dog Park	0	-	16	12 Urban model is .25-.5 acre, high maintenance. Locate in proportion to population	Lower / add in urban areas		The site is too small. The multi-use nature of the park will satisfy dog-on-a-leash use.	N
Hard surface Trails (regional)	0	Contribute to implementing the Silver Spring Green Trail, a linear park intended to link		Identify and fill gaps in regional trail system, improve links to bikeway system	High /		No trail or share use paths are designated at this location.	N

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		downtown locations with the surrounding park and trail system, while creating a distinctive green path through the CBD. (p.73)						
Community Gardens	0	-	N/A	18 Locate in proportion to population, use urban model	Moderate / provide especially in urban areas		The site is too small to accommodate the recommended size and number of traditional garden plots. If requested by the community, explore design of a compact urban model.	Y
Community Open Space	0	- p. 36 "improve and reinforce the transitional areas, open spaces and gathering places, landmarks and focal points."	N/A	Number not determined. Urban model can be smaller than 10,000 sf. Priority is urban areas.	N/A		Needed in all parks, use urban model (smaller than 10,000 sf). Should be sized to accommodate flexible programming and activation.	Y
Volleyball Courts	0	NA		7 Lighted, grouped courts preferable, near major roads in Countywide Parks	Groups of 4-6 courts, lighted, for tournament play		Needs were for groupings of courts with lights, so will not fit in this park.	N

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PROS TEAM AREA FACILITY NEEDS – Bethesda Team Area 35								
Rectangular Field: <i>Adult 10-65+ Youth</i>	0		15.1 .1	1	High	NA	Will not fit in this urban park. Provide smaller community open space areas for un-permitted ball play.	N
Diamond Field: <i>Youth (0-9) multi-purpose Youth (10-13) baseball/(10-65+) softball Adult (14+) 90' baseball</i>	0		-.3 -4.3 3.5	0	High	NA	Will not fit in this urban park. Provided smaller community open space areas for un-permitted ball play.	N
PROS PLANNING AREA FACILITIES								
Playgrounds	1	NA	1	Provide in every neighborhood and local park showing need	Higher / maintain high level of service	68% of park use	Very popular activity. Provide play opportunity using urban models.	Y
Basketball Courts	0	NA	0	Provide in planning areas showing need	Lower / consider multiple uses of courts	NA		N
Tennis Courts	0	NA	0	Provide in planning areas showing need	Mid / decrease underutilized courts	NA		N
Streetscape		Use Silver Spring Streetscape Guidelines, currently being updated.						Y