



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

MCPB Item #8  
Date: 07 / 18 / 2019

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** July 11, 2019

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks  
Shuchi Vera, Acting Deputy Director, Administration *SV*  
Bill Tyler, Acting Deputy Director, Operations  
David Vismara, Division Chief, Horticulture, Forestry & Environmental Education (HFEE)  
Andrew Frank, Division Chief, Park Development Division (PDD) *Andrew Frank*

**FROM:** Brenda Sandberg, Real Estate Management Supervisor, PDD *BES*  
Stephanie Oberle, Director, Brookside Gardens, HFEE

**SUBJECT:** Land Acquisition Recommendation: McCrillis Gardens Special Park  
Janet E. Lanman Revocable Trust Property  
9120 Burdette Road, Bethesda, MD 20817  
42,389 square feet, more or less, improved

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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

- 1) Approve the addition of McCrillis Gardens Special Park and the Janet E. Lanman Revocable Trust property ("Lanman Property") to the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan in the Urban Open Space category.
- 2) Approve Resolution No. 19-104 for acquisition of the Janet E. Lanman Revocable Trust property as an addition to McCrillis Gardens Special Park for a negotiated purchase price of \$1,300,000 to be funded with Legacy Open Space CIP Commission Bonds.

**SUMMARY**

The Lanman Property is a one-time opportunity to improve public access to and the functionality of McCrillis Gardens Special Park. The intent of this purchase is to provide the space necessary to increase public access to support park programming and functionality in the future.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map, Proposed Lanman Property addition to McCrillis Gardens Special Park

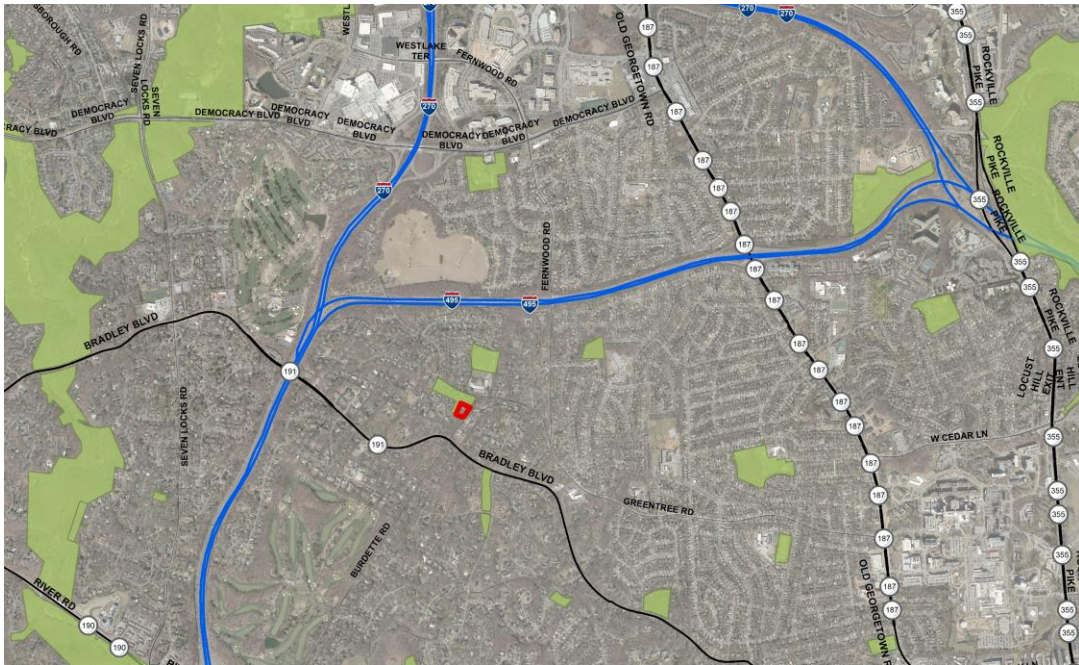
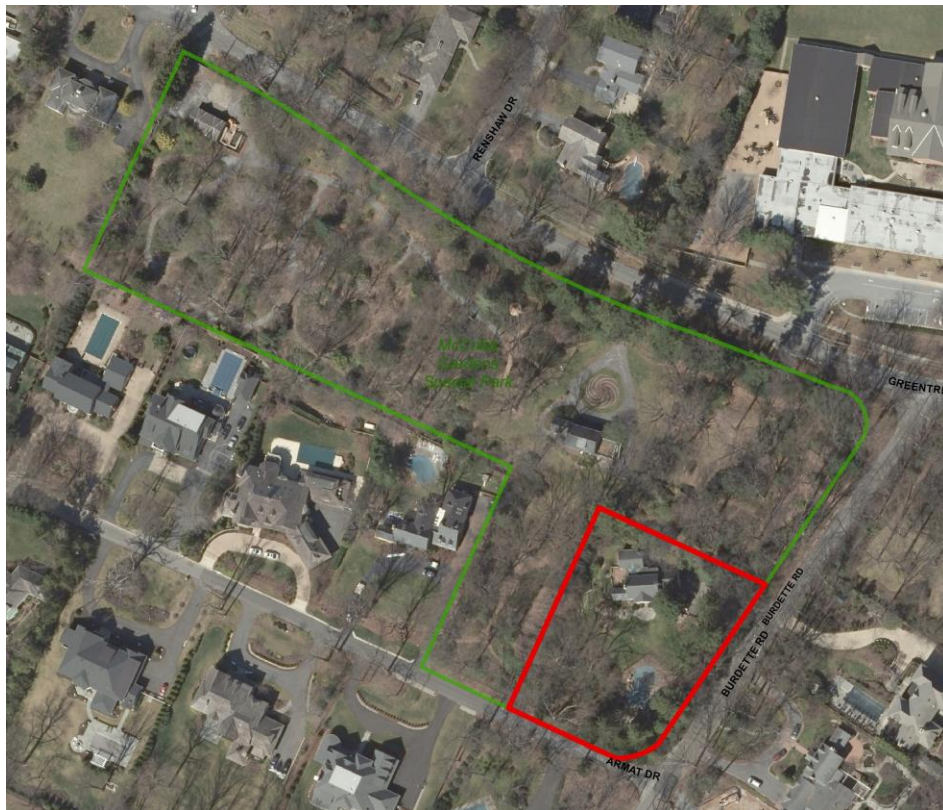


Figure 2: Aerial Photo, Proposed Lanman Property addition to McCrillis Gardens Special Park





## PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS

The Janet E. Lanman Revocable Trust property ("Lanman Property") consists of 42,389 square feet of land, more or less, of improved land that is zoned R-200. The property address is 9120 Burdette Road and is legally described as Block 1, Lot 1 in a subdivision known as Longwood. The property includes the original house from 1939 with significant additions and modifications. The house was recently upgraded to meet County standards for a leased property and is therefore in good condition. The property is landscaped in a similar fashion and age to the surrounding McCrillis Gardens with mature trees, unusual specimens, and masses of azaleas. The grounds also include a driveway, parking pad, stone walkways, and an in-ground pool.

*Figure 3. Lanman Property Aerial*



*Figure 4: Lanman house, ca. 1938 plus recent additions, 2900 sf, brick colonial architecture*



## MCCRILLIS GARDENS SPECIAL PARK

McCrillis Gardens, the former home of William H. and Virginia C. McCrillis since 1941, was donated to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on July 11, 1978 for the purpose of a public horticultural park. The deed of conveyance included the covenants that *"...all future improvements constructed or reconstructed thereon, shall be used only as horticultural gardens for the edification and benefit of the general public..."* and that *"The covenants herein shall exist in perpetuity, in the furtherance of the intentions of the parties hereto to create a permanent public benefit."*

Today, McCrillis Gardens is a premier five-acre shade garden with plant collections established by Mr. McCrillis beginning in the 1940s and continuing into the 1970s. His passion for azaleas and rhododendrons led him to procure unusual species and cultivars from West Coast nurseries. In addition, through a long-term professional association with the Chief Horticulturist for the National Capital Planning Commission in Washington, DC, he was able to acquire quite rare companion trees and shrubs. Many of these plants have attained specimen size in the present day. Since 1979 under the management of Brookside Gardens, HFEE Division, the landscape has been reconfigured to facilitate public access, and plant collections have been enhanced with hundreds of trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials and wildflowers, significantly expanding the season of bloom and horticultural complexity.

McCrillis Gardens Special Park, located northwest of the Bethesda CBD inside the Beltway, surrounds the corner Lanman property. The neighborhood was once characterized by one-acre lots with smaller houses built in the 1930s through the 1950s. In recent years, many homes have been purchased by developers, torn down, and redeveloped as significantly larger residences with extensive impervious surfaces, with the accompanying loss of mature tree canopy.

*Figure 5. McCrillis House viewed from entrance, McCrillis Gardens Special Park*





*Figure 6. Garden view, McCrillis Gardens Special Park*



## **MASTER PLAN AND POLICY RATIONALE**

One key recommendation of the *2017 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan* is to ensure existing lands and facilities are used to their maximum potential. This acquisition would provide the land necessary for McCrillis Gardens to reach for its maximum functionality and allow for more County residents to enjoy the beautiful gardens.

The *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan* (2001, LOS FMP) supports the preservation of green spaces in all areas of the County to meet a variety of purposes, including increasing access to nature and green spaces for urban and suburban residents. McCrillis Gardens Special Park and this proposed addition meets the Legacy Open Space criteria to be a designated an *Urban Open Space* site, primarily by being a unique garden resource in the developed portion of the County that can provide access to nature and green space. The LOS Advisory Group, the citizens group that advises staff on the implementation of the LOS FMP, recommends adding this property to the LOS program. Staff intends to use LOS Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding to acquire the property and to fund initial site improvements to functionally incorporate the property into McCrillis Gardens.

## **START UP COSTS & OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (OBI)**

Interim site improvements will be implemented after acquisition to make the property safe, accessible, and initially functional as part of the Gardens. The in-ground pool will be removed and is proposed to be replaced with a temporary gravel parking pad. Additional interim improvements to the grounds and the house may be completed to address proposed Park uses and safety improvements in the short term. These start-up costs will be funded with the LOS program's Site Improvement funds in FY20 and FY21. Interim work could cost from \$100K to \$250K.

Operating budget impacts (OBI) for managing a more active and accessible McCrillis Gardens in the future would require more staffing support. In this interim phase, requested OBI is likely to include about \$14,000

to convert an existing career Gardener position from part-time to full-time (0.25 WY). OBI for annual building maintenance and utilities is estimated to be an additional \$10,000.

Plans for full implementation of a future vision for McCrillis Gardens would be developed with community input and presented to the Planning Board for review and approval. As site improvements and new programming are planned to implement the future vision, capital and operating budget costs will be determined during park development and operating budget processes and brought to the Planning Board for review and approval at that time.

*Figure 7. Azaleas in bloom, McCrillis Gardens Special Park*



Real Estate Management and Brookside Gardens staff are pleased to bring this acquisition to the Planning Board for approval to implement this rare chance to provide a functional addition to McCrillis Gardens Special Park.

*Attachment: MCPB Resolution #19-104*

CC: Jai Cole  
Darryl McSwain  
Jim Poore  
Kristi Williams  
Megan Chung  
Robert Kronenberg

*Attachment*

**MCPB No. 19-104**

**Acquisition of the Lanman Property as an Addition to the McCrillis Gardens Special Park**

**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 Montgomery County Planning Board received and considered a recommendation from staff of the Commission, in closed session on July 11, 2019, that it approve the acquisition of 42,389 square feet of land, more or less, improved, (the "Property") from the Janet E. Lanman Revocable Trust as an addition to McCrillis Gardens Special Park; and

WHEREAS, the Property meets parkland acquisition criteria as an addition to McCrillis Gardens Special Park; and

WHEREAS, the Property meets Legacy Open Space criteria to be designated an Urban Open Space resource within the Legacy Open Space program; and

WHEREAS, there are sufficient Commission Bonds available in the Commission's FY-20 Legacy Open Space CIP to pay the \$1,300,000 negotiated purchase price for the Property; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the acquisition of the Property from the Seller as described above, for a purchase price of \$1,300,000, is hereby approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board on this 18<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2019 and the Executive Director is authorized to issue payment on behalf of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

\* \* \* \* \*

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 Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ voting in favor of the motion at its regular meeting held on Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup> 2018 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

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

**Signature:**

**Email:**

**Signature:**

**Email:**

**Signature:** *Shuchi Vera*

**Email:** shuchi.vera@montgomeryparks.org