



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

MCPB  
Item: 6  
Date: May 14, 2020

May 7, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 30, 2020

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *mr*  
Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director, Administration *mf*  
Andy Frank, Division Chief, Park Development Division (PDD) *Andy Frank*

**FROM:** David Tobin, Manager, Public-Private Partnerships, PDD  
Brenda Sandberg, Real Estate Management Supervisor, PDD

**SUBJECT:** Meadowbrook Stables Phase II Concept Plan

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** APPROVE Meadowbrook Stables Phase II concept plan with conditions.

## SUMMARY

Founded in 1934, Meadowbrook Stables has a long history of providing equestrian education to Montgomery County residents through a Public-Private Partnership with the Maryland-National Capital Planning Commission. In November 2001, the Planning Board approved a development plan for Meadowbrook Stables that consisted of renovations and new construction in two phases. That development plan included the concept of a covered riding arena as part of the second phase of development to improve the functionality of Meadowbrook Stables. Many improvements to the facilities were completed in 2003 (Phase I) funded through a combination of public and private funds, including approximately \$5 million in charitable donations. Phase II of the 2001 development plan to construct the covered riding arena, was initiated in 2019 and will be funded entirely by charitable donations to Meadowbrook Foundation Inc.

Concept review of the proposed covered riding arena by Parks staff began in fall 2019 and the concept was shared for public comment in late 2019. The majority of public comments supported the proposed covered riding arena, but some comments raised questions about environmental impacts and some adjacent neighbors expressed opposition to the arena. Over the past several months Parks staff has provided detailed information to the public to answer questions and respond to comments. Significant changes in the building design to address both staff and public comments have resulted in an open and attractive building that blends with the

historic and otherwise agricultural surroundings. Parks staff recommend approval of the concept plan presented in this memorandum with conditions to support a long-standing, viable, and beneficial public-private partnership.

## BACKGROUND

Meadowbrook Stables has a long history as a Public-Private Partnership with the Commission. This historic stables is located along the left bank of Rock Creek within Rock Creek Stream Valley Park just south of East-West Highway and north of the County boundary with the District of Columbia between the Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Silver Spring communities. The historic stables, a portion of the viewshed to it from East/West Highway, and the historic farrier (blacksmith) shop are designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation as an individual resource. See Figure 1 for boundary of the historically designated area. Note that the current project is outside of the historically designated area.

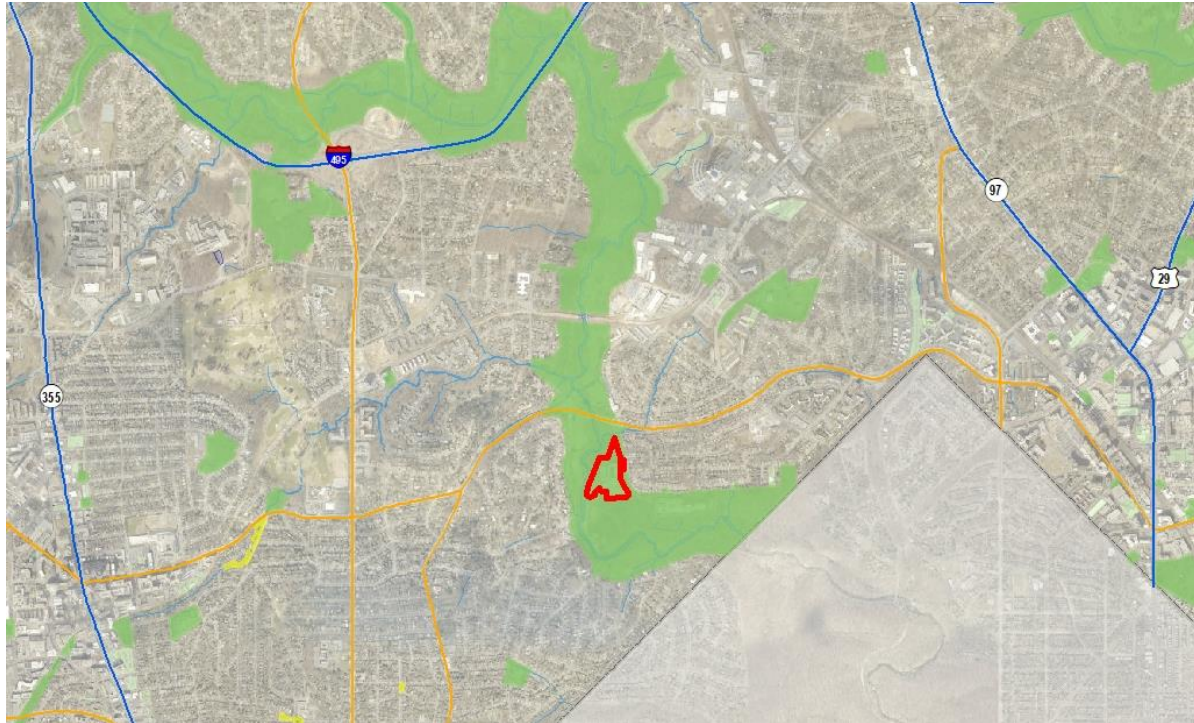
*Figure 1. Historic Environmental Setting boundary*



Founded in 1934 as Rock Creek Stables, what is now known as Meadowbrook Stables is one of the oldest and last remaining urban equestrian facilities in the United States. Its mission is to provide excellence in equestrian education; promote youth development; implement green and sustainable horse-keeping practices; provide high-quality life-long care for its horses; make

horses accessible to those who could not otherwise afford to ride; and preserve Meadowbrook as an historic equine facility to ensure that future generations have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of riding and interacting with horses.

*Figure 2. Meadowbrook Stables Location in Rock Creek Stream Valley Park*



Meadowbrook serves over 450 youth and adult riders each year. Meadowbrook's programs include group and private lessons, summer camp, high school and middle school team competition, and individual competition at the local, regional and national level. At the upper levels, Meadowbrook riders regularly qualify to compete in national finals, and two riders have gone on to represent the United States in international competition. Approximately 300 riders take part in its various lesson programs and another 150 in summer camp.

The stables campus is open daily to the public from dawn to dusk, allowing families, school groups, and all members of the public to watch and interact with the horses, picnic and relax. Meadowbrook also provides and maintains public restrooms and drinking water facilities for joggers, cyclists, and other members of the public using the adjacent Rock Creek Trail and other nearby park facilities. Meadowbrook distributes a periodic "Neighborhood Newsletter" to inform the community about upcoming events and opportunities for them to take advantage of the Stables' programs, as well as maintaining a website and active social media accounts for this purpose.

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The Meadowbrook Stables facility operates on approximately 9.5 acres of parkland under a lease agreement with M-NCPPC. Phase 1 improvements to the facility were completed in 2005, including restoration of the historic farrier shed, reconfiguration of the riding rings, new perimeter fencing and pathways, improvements to public picnic areas, lighting, construction of a utility



building, and additional stormwater management. Today, the facility contains the following elements (Figure 3):

- Large historic barn/stables and farrier shed
- Four enclosed riding rings (Rings A, B, C, D) and a small circular round pen
- Utility building for manure and bedding storage
- Fenced grass pastures
- Staff parking lot
- Gravel access road
- Central picnic and seating area

*Figure 3. Meadowbrook Stables Existing Conditions*



Public visitor parking (20 spaces) for Meadowbrook Stables is provided along the east side of Meadowbrook Lane in a lot directly across from the Meadowbrook barn entrance. The active stable facilities are fully enclosed with traditional wood board fencing and is planted with trees and shrubs, with vegetation along much of the southeastern portion of the property. The facility is open to the public through two clearly labelled gates on the eastern and southern entrance.

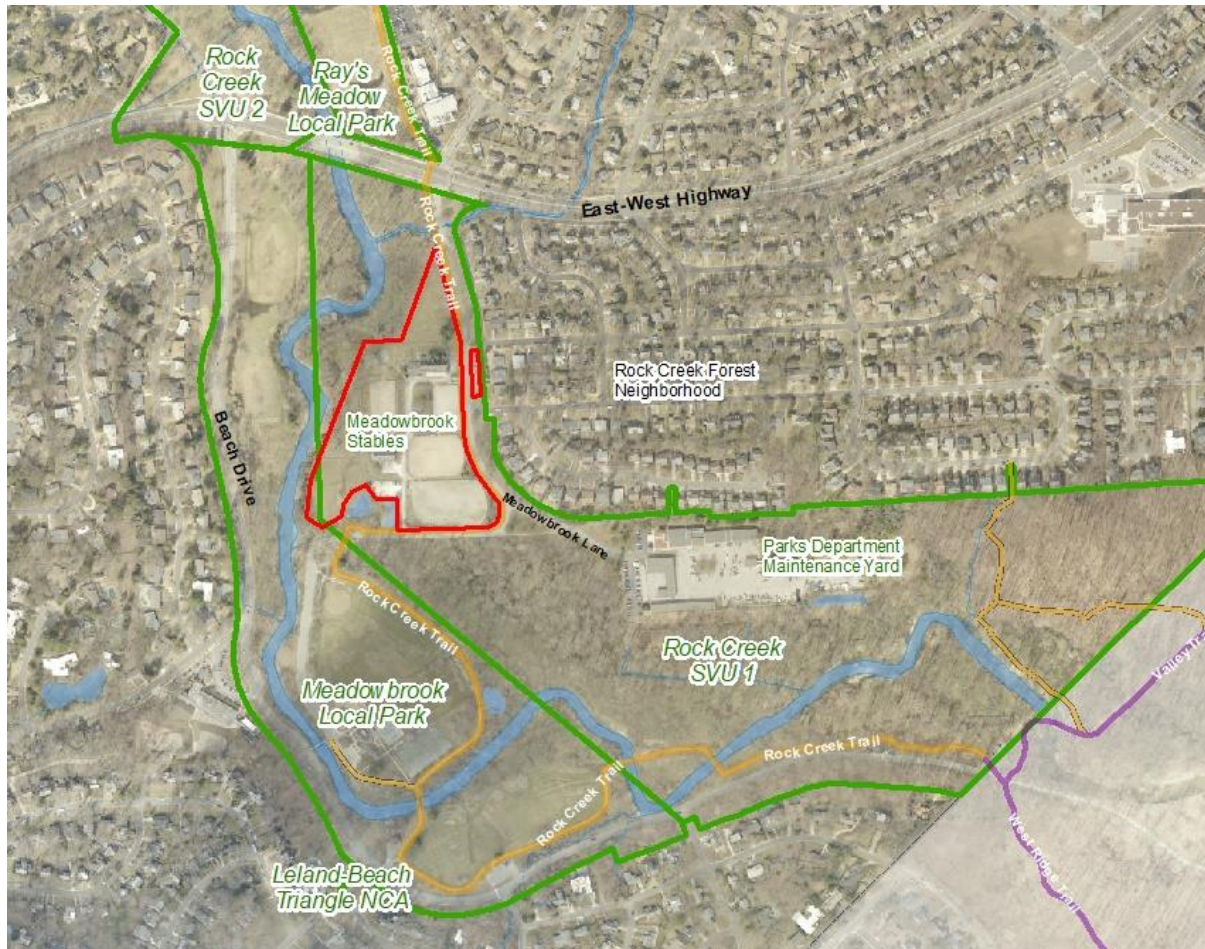
*Figure 4. Main entrance*





The land use surrounding Meadowbrook Stables (Figure 5) is a mixture of park, recreational areas, and single-family detached homes. Meadowbrook Lane and an asphalt multi-use trail (Rock Creek Trail) border the Meadowbrook grounds along its east and south sides. Meadowbrook Local Park (also known as Candy Cane City) is situated to the south, with playground, playing fields, a recreation center, and tennis courts. A Montgomery Parks maintenance complex is also located to the southeast of Meadowbrook Stables, with Rock Creek and Beach Drive to the west, the Rock Creek Forest neighborhood to the east, and parkland and East-West Highway to the north.

*Figure 5. Meadowbrook Stables Surrounding Community*



## PHASE II CONCEPT PLAN

Building a covered arena to support the functionality of Meadowbrook Stables was included as Phase II of the overall development plan approved by the Planning Board in 2001. This 2019 Concept Plan to implement Phase II differs both in location and design to address several issues with the location and design initially proposed in 2001. The new location and design also will provide significant operational benefits to Meadowbrook Stables. Design and construction of the covered arena will be funded entirely by charitable contributions. So far, the Meadowbrook Foundation reports that pledged donations to the project exceed \$1.4 Million from 123 donors with donations ranging from \$25 to \$150,000. The average contribution is \$11,500.

Working in collaboration with Montgomery Parks staff, Meadowbrook Stables has assembled a qualified team of staff and consultants for this project.

## **Location**

The development plan approved in 2001 showed the covered riding arena in Ring D, closer to Rock Creek and the historic stables. However, changes in floodplain construction practices and stormwater management standards led Parks staff to identify concerns with the originally proposed Ring D location for the covered arena. Discussions with Meadowbrook Stables identified the fact that Ring C is further from the Rock Creek stream bed than Ring D and, although both rings are situated within the floodplain, Ring C is located at the very outer edge of the floodplain.

Meadowbrook ultimately proposed locating the arena in Ring C to allow for the covered arena design to meet modern standards for equestrian training, including jumping and group lesson exercises. The current covered arena proposal prioritizes the usable area for horse riding and exercise and allows for significantly more rideable area than the previous design.

## **Design and Features**

Parks staff has worked with the Stables to propose an arena that provides the structural stability necessary while providing as much transparency and “open” feel as possible. Similarly, efforts have been made to ensure that the proposed concept design be consistent with the feel and other attributes of the existing structures and the historic environmental setting. While the proposed covered arena is well outside of the historic environmental setting of the historic barn (Figure 1), Parks staff felt the design should be approached as if it were under historic review because the site operates as a campus. This perspective results in a more historically contextual design than was first submitted by the Stables design team.

The 2001 design was for an open-sided pavilion structure (total roof area 29,400 sq. ft.) that relied on a series of narrow support poles. A major drawback of that design was the fact that the functional space – i.e. the rideable surface area for horses (20,000 sq. ft.) -- was a small portion of the entire pavilion area. The current design for the arena (total roof area 28,125 sq. ft.) addresses that by using more structural reinforcements at the corners with large architectural beams that span the width of the arena to create the largest functional space possible. The current design provides almost 26,000 square feet of rideable surface and allows for a smaller covered viewing aisle for spectators. The current design also creates an arena that is predominantly open to fresh air, light and views, but also allows the arena space to be enclosed during inclement weather.

The covered arena and access surfaces will cover approximately two-thirds of the existing exposed sand surface within riding Ring C. The balance of the existing ring will be planted with native trees, shrubs, and grasses that will help capture and filter sediment and nutrients.

The current proposed covered riding arena measures 225-feet in length and 125-feet in width, with a sloped standing seam metal roof ranging in height between 16 and 32-feet above the riding surface. The building is designed for visual compatibility with the historic barn and with the adjacent utility building built in 2003 with the following features:

- A stone skirt at each of the building corners
- Historically sensitive trim color around the windows and doors
- Board-and-batten style siding
- Multi-pane windows
- Gable-end glazed opening similar in size to hay chute door
- Historic design exterior light fixtures
- Three cupolas on the roof

A primary feature of the design is 20 retractable side panels that function similarly to garage doors to allow for an open-air environment for most of the year. The panels include significant areas of windows to provide interior light and visibility into the pavilion when inclement weather conditions (excessive cold, wind or storms) require the closure of the panels to shelter activities. See Figures 6 through 9 for a concept illustration, elevations and cross sections.

Proposed site development includes: a new horse/pedestrian path between the internal access road and the arena; additional landscaping (along the west, south, and east sides); two new bio-swales (north and south/west); and a new walkway. A proposed solar installation on the south side of the roof which will generate over 150,000 kWh of power per year. The project would also remove elevated on-site floodlights (20) immediately surrounding Ring C since the pavilion would have interior lighting, thereby negating the need for the taller floodlights.

*Figure 6. Riding Arena Concept Illustration (North Elevation with panels open)*





Figure 7. Riding Arena Elevations: North and West Elevations with Panels Closed

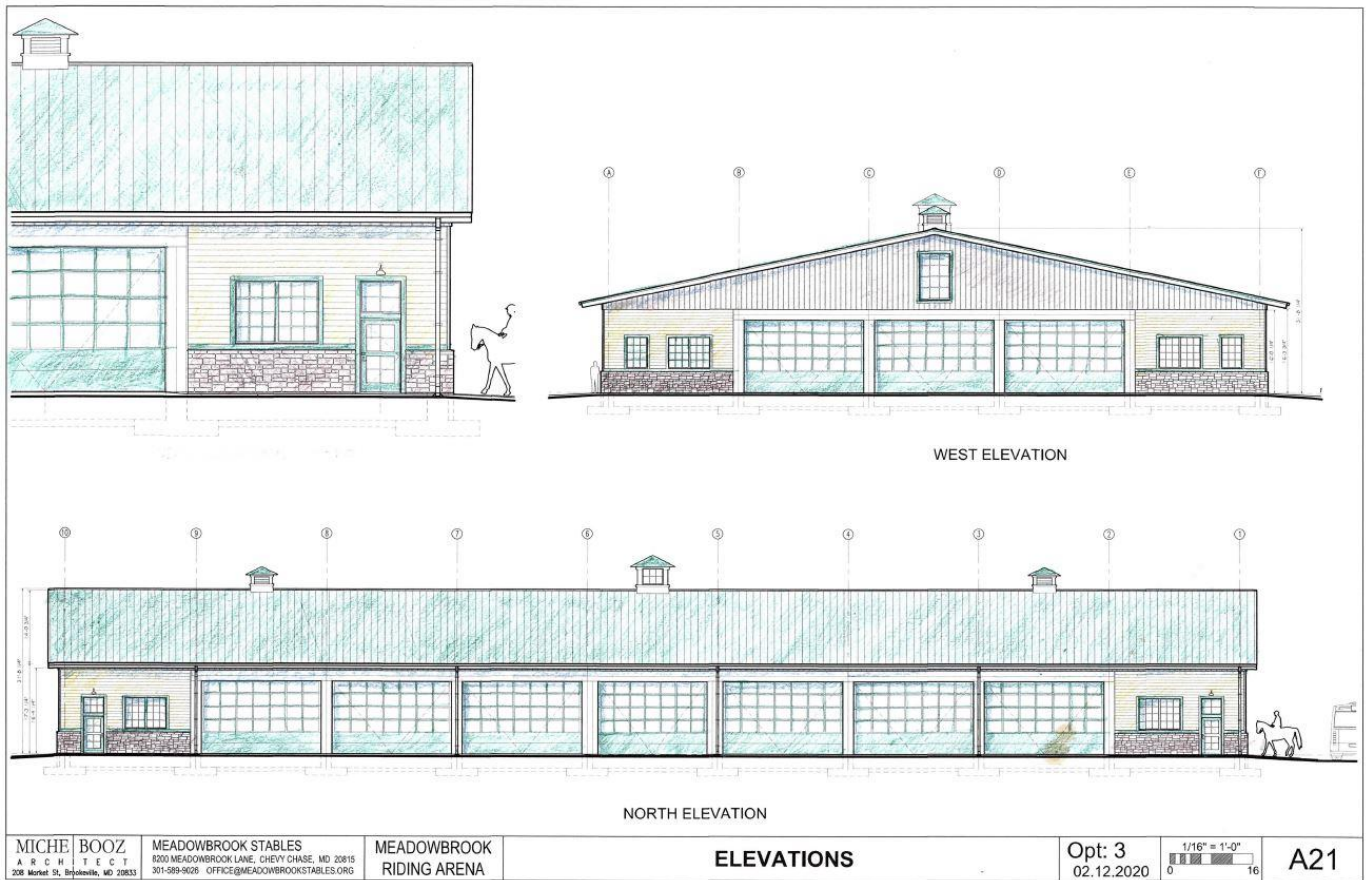


Figure 8. Riding Arena Elevations: East and South with Panels Closed, Solar Panels Shown

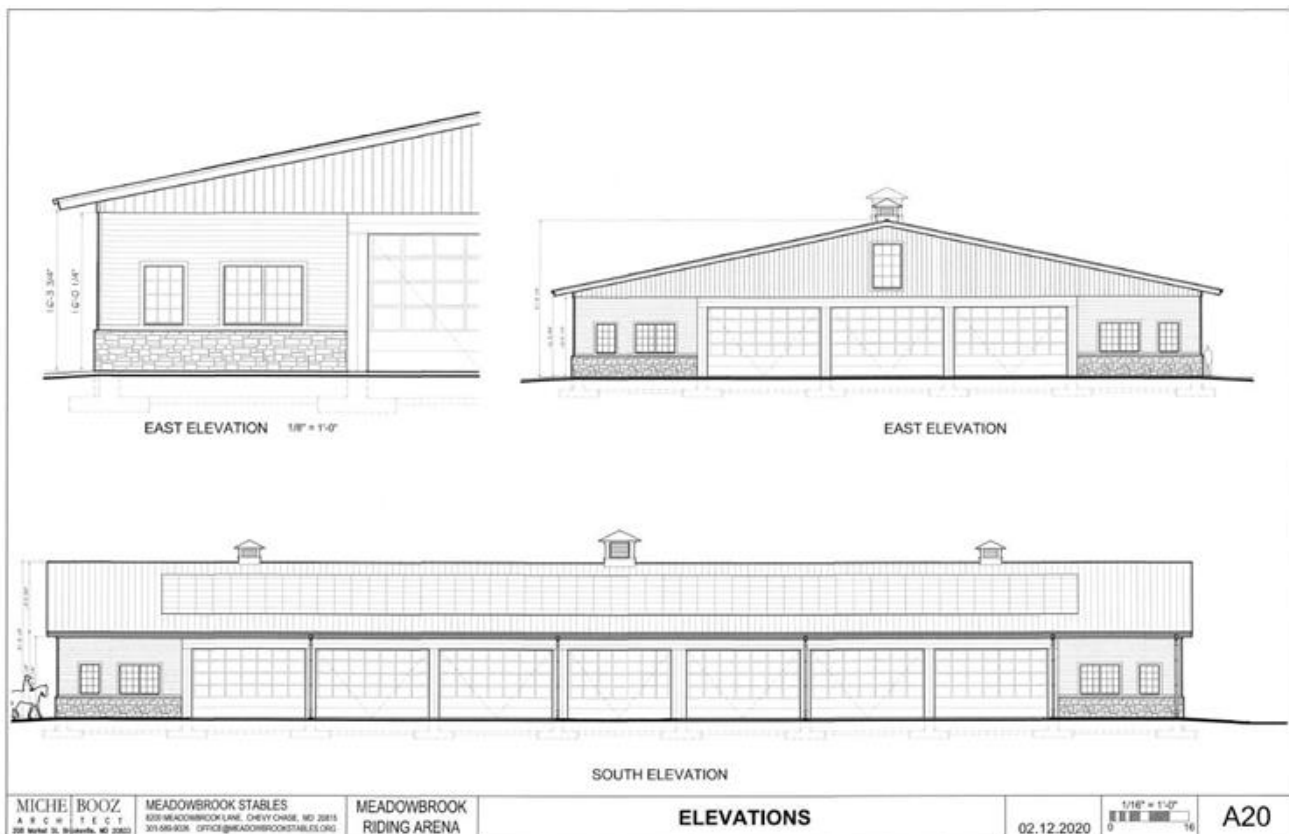
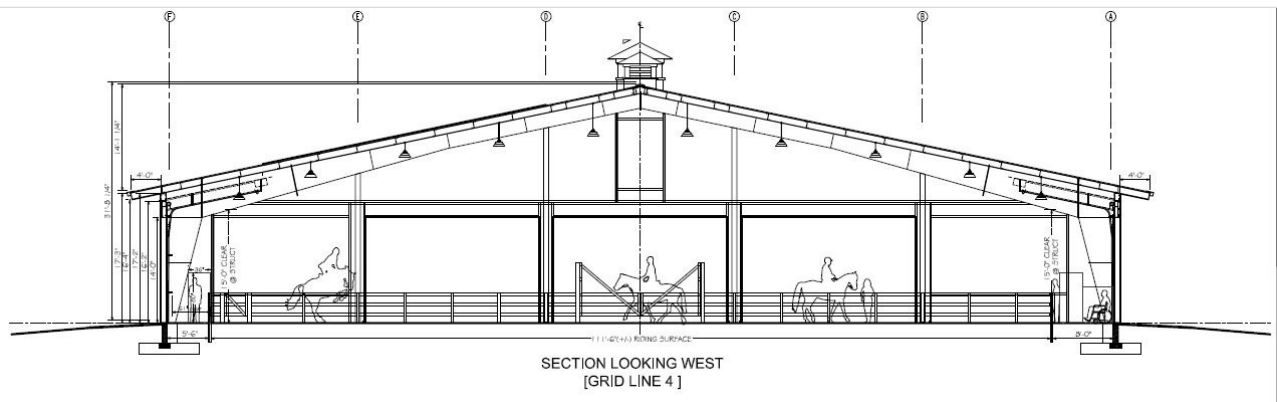


Figure 9. Riding Arena Cross Section



## Operational Benefits

The larger rideable area created by locating the covered arena in Ring C directly results in key operational benefits to the Stables. These include:

- 1) **Greater All-Weather Lesson and Horse Exercise Capacity:** The covered arena will accommodate up to 10-12 riders at a time. This will allow Meadowbrook to consolidate two of its four hourly group lessons or team practices during inclement weather or unfavorable ground conditions, benefitting up to 180 riders per week.
- 2) **Enhanced Flexibility for Advanced and Jumping Level Instruction:** The covered arena will be large enough to set a course of jumps, while still allowing enough room for riders. It would thus be appropriate for all levels of lessons, from beginners through advanced riders.
- 3) **Maximum Horse Turn Out Space:** It is recommended that each horse have at least two to three hours of free, unstructured (“turn-out”) time each day, with appropriate staff supervision to ensure their safety. Horses turned out in Rings A, B, and D can be seen directly from the barn. Horses turned out in Ring C cannot be seen from the barn due to its further distance. For this reason, Ring C has not been used for turnout for over 20 years. Ring C is therefore better suited for the proposed covered arena, leaving Rings A, B and D for turnout space.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

The integrity and fairness of the public outreach process, and responsiveness to public questions and comments is of major importance to Parks staff. Throughout the public comments period, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ, Attachment A) posted on the Montgomery Parks Projects web page was constantly updated to respond to questions and concerns raised and keep the public up-to-date on the project.

The proposed concept plan was released for public comment as soon as possible once Meadowbrook Stables determined they had the financial backing to pursue the project. On January 2, 2020, the Public Affairs and Community Partnerships (PACP) Division, in collaboration with Park Planning and Stewardship (PPSD) and Park Development Division

(PDD), launched a comprehensive public outreach strategy that consisted of a range of face-to-face and online interactions. The targeted audiences for outreach included surrounding community members (residents, HOA members), stake holders (i.e. Rock Creek Conservancy), and elected officials (including County Council District and At-Large members and State representatives for District 18).

- **Project Webpage on Montgomery Parks website**
  - Launched January 2, 2020, and updated continually
  - Includes project description, background, and current status
  - Includes calendar of outreach events and links to opportunities to comment
- **Web-Based Open Town Hall**
  - Interactive platform to receive public comments on-line
  - Launched January 2, 2020
  - Total of 186 comments submitted as of April 6, 2020
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document**
  - Posted on project webpage (January 2, 2020)
  - Continuously updated to respond to submitted questions and comments
- **Social Media Presence**
  - Facebook and Twitter
  - Updates and pending events posted on an ongoing basis
- **Public Meeting held on January 16, 2020**
  - Presentations given by Parks and Stables staff to describe initial proposal, methods of community input, and overall development process
  - Meeting promoted using multiple outreach tools
    - On-site signage posted, December 20
    - Emails sent to area homeowner associations, January 2
    - Postcards mailed to ~250 residents within .25-mile radius of Stables (Figure 10), January 4
    - Social media messages sent through Twitter and Facebook, January 8 to 16
  - Attendance included Parks and Stables staff, Stables design team, and approximately 45 community members
- **Follow up Meeting, February 6**
  - At the request of residents, Park staff attended a meeting with a group of 12 concerned neighbors at one neighbor's house to answer further questions about the floodplain, stormwater management, architectural design, and other concerns
  - Attendees for Montgomery Parks included Deputy Director Miti Figueredo, PDD Division Chief Andy Frank, and Project Manager David Tobin
- **Email Project Update, March 15**
  - Update on project schedule sent to neighbors who attended the January 16 Public Meeting



Figure 10. Outreach Postcard and Online Public Meeting Notice



From January through March, staff received hundreds of comments (included in Attachments B and C) in response to the Parks outreach campaign. Approximately 80% of the substantive comments received were supportive of the project. Staff analysis of the key issues is presented later in this memorandum.

## NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION (NCPC) REVIEW

Acquisition of the Meadowbrook Stables portion of Rock Creek Stream Valley Park was funded in part by federal funds from the 1930 Capper-Cramton Act. Per the requirements of Capper-Cramton Act and subsequent agreements with the M-NCPPC, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) has approval authority for changes to the park's General Development Plan including ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). The NCPC hearing on the Meadowbrook Covered Arena is scheduled for May 7, 2020. Staff anticipates that NCPC will approve the project. The most recent NCPC Staff Report, Final Environmental Assessment, and Finding of No Significant Impact, posted on May 7, 2020, are found in Attachment D.

NCPC also has the authority to review and approve compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. NCPC delegates review authority for Section 106 to the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), which serves as the State Historic Preservation Office. Meadowbrook Stables and Montgomery Parks submitted a Section 106 assessment letter to MHT requesting concurrence with a finding of "no adverse effect." MHT determined that the proposed location and design of the arena would have "No Adverse Effect" on the historic stables (Attachment E).

## **ANALYSIS OF CONCEPT PLAN**

### **Public Benefit**

Meadowbrook Stables is a truly unique resource for the citizens of Montgomery County. It is one of the oldest and last remaining urban riding facilities in the United States and has played an important role in the Maryland and National Capital region since 1934. There were once many urban equestrian facilities like Meadowbrook Stables in cities across the country, but due to increasing pressures of urbanization, most of these places have closed.

Over 7,400 children and adults have ridden at Meadowbrook since 2002 alone, attracted by its positive culture, commitment to horse welfare, and tradition of excellence in riding and horsemanship. Meadowbrook's stated mission is to encourage riders and staff to reflect the qualities of kindness, responsibility, sportsmanship, teamwork, and compassionate care for animals, which are goals shared by Parks.

Meadowbrook is also a place where members of the public, including day care centers, schools, youth groups, families, seniors and others, can come to watch and interact with the horses, and learn about them. Meadowbrook welcomes the public to visit its barn and grounds seven days per week, on a year-round basis. In the new arena, all visitors will be able to watch horse shows and lessons under cover from the elements in the ADA-accessible viewing area.

Meadowbrook Stables' continued operation also supports the community by employing 13 fulltime staff and up to 25 part-time staff, including many local youths in summer camp programs. The Stables also provides need-based scholarships to committed students who couldn't otherwise afford to ride.

### **Purpose and Need**

Meadowbrook Stables must evolve and change in response to changing conditions and industry practices. The purpose and need of a covered riding arena are to enable Meadowbrook to meet recommended standards of horse care and enable classes and training to continue during heavy rain events, extreme cold, high winds, and other inclement weather. Heavy and prolonged rain events, which are increasingly prevalent throughout the year with recent climate change, result in unsafe conditions for horses to exercise and classes to take place, as described in more detail below. Last year, Meadowbrook had to cancel many lessons and one of its three horse shows, resulting in less practice time for riders and significantly reduced income for the facility. Meadowbrook will not increase the number of lessons or events once the covered arena is operational, since programming capacity is limited by the number of horses permitted to be on the property. Having the covered arena will prevent the cancellation of scheduled lessons. A cover over Ring C will also address the need for safe exercise space outside of lessons when inclement weather conditions and unsafe horse footing conditions exist, allowing stable operations to continue giving both riders and horses the opportunity to train safely and consistently, regardless of the weather.

### **Horse Health and Wellness**

Since Meadowbrook was founded in 1934, standards in horse health and wellness have evolved significantly. Guidance related to horse health care is provided by the U.S. Equestrian

Federation, the U.S. Hunter Jumper Association, and by multiple scholarly articles over the years regarding medical discoveries and the prevention and treatment of health-related problems. Horses should have unstructured "turn out" time each day where they can move around freely outside of their stalls, in addition to more structured exercise and training time.

While it is certainly possible for horses to be turned out and even ridden in drizzle, light rain, and/or moderate wind, this is never advisable if the sand rings become too saturated with water from prolonged periods of rain. Additionally, heavy rain events significantly degrade horse footing conditions, which can become slippery, thereby jeopardizing horse safety and, by extension, rider safety. When this happens at Meadowbrook today, with four open rings, horses are denied the opportunity for exercise. Having the covered arena will ensure that the Meadowbrook horses are consistently provided with the recommended standard of exercise.

### **Continuity of Operations**

The problem of having to cancel events due to prolonged rains degrading horse footing conditions in the open sand rings also impacts Meadowbrook's instructional programs operations. As mentioned above, saturated rings following prolonged rains impacts rider safety. Private lessons, team practices, and horse shows are often canceled altogether. Group lessons are often moved indoors, into a classroom setting, but this reduced riding time results in reduced interest and riding skill development. These weather-related cancellations have a significant financial impact on operations.

Last April, Meadowbrook had to cancel one of its three annual horse shows due to prolonged rains before the event, which degraded ring conditions, resulting in an estimated loss of \$20,000 in income. In addition, lesson cancellations can result in well over \$50,000 per year of lost revenue, making it more difficult for Meadowbrook to continue its wide variety of programming. Meadowbrook reports that 179 private lessons and 219 team practice sessions had to be cancelled from September 2019 to February 2020 due to inclement outdoor conditions, resulting in \$36,000 of lost income in this six-month period. Having the covered arena will greatly reduce these cancellations and lost revenue.

### **Floodplain**

The Meadowbrook Stables campus was developed many decades ago along the left bank of Rock Creek, well within the 100-year floodplain of Rock Creek (see Figure 11). The Rock Creek watershed upstream of this location is very large and receives stormwater runoff from the middle third of Montgomery County. This large, heavily developed watershed accounts for the flooding of Rock Creek that occurs after large rain events across Meadowbrook Local Park, Meadowbrook Lane (south of the Stables), and portions of the Meadowbrook Stables campus.

Due to the relatively small area of the Meadowbrook Stables compared to the significant land mass draining to this point in the Rock Creek watershed, stormwater runoff from the existing or proposed Stables facilities themselves is not considered to be a significant contributor to the flooding of these areas. A January 2020 "Alteration of the Floodplain Computations and Report" (Attachment F), prepared to meet permitting requirements, evaluated the location and design of the proposed covered arena was approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The report concludes "... there will be no impact on the 100-year floodplain elevation of the Rock Creek floodplain" resulting from the proposed development.



Despite the fact that the proposed arena has no measurable impact on the overall flooding issues in this area of Rock Creek, M-NCPPC always looks to minimize building construction in the floodplain and holds itself and its partners to a high review standard when it comes to building within floodplains. Throughout the review process, the Stables was instructed by staff to utilize “avoid, minimize, mitigate” strategies as defined in the Policy for Parks.

*Figure 11. 100-Year Floodplain (Purple Shading)*



Several floodplain impact reduction measures have been incorporated into the project design including lowering the finished floor elevation of the covered arena, making the building flow-through to prevent blocking floodwaters (both through the retractable side panels and passive flood vents), and lowering exterior grades around the covered arena to provide additional floodplain storage. Additionally, by siting the proposed covered arena within Ring C, it will be located as far from the banks of Rock Creek as is possible within the site.

### **Stormwater Management**

Separate from the flooding issues caused by out of bank water flows through Rock Creek past the Meadowbrook site, stormwater runoff from impervious structures (pavement and buildings) must always be addressed in new construction projects. Runoff from the roof of the proposed arena will be captured in bio-swales that are designed to recharge groundwater in smaller storms, treat runoff from moderate storms, and convey water around the building in larger storms. In addition, the project calls for converting over 30,000 sq. ft. from a sand riding surface to an area that captures and filters runoff using microtopography and native planting, including trees, shrubs, and grasses. The bio-swales and the conservation landscaping will work together to capture and filter sediment and nutrients before runoff enters the permanent sediment trap

and then into the stormwater pond prior to draining into Rock Creek. These are shown below (Figure 12). The measures associated with the covered arena are part of the larger stormwater management facilities at the site shown in Attachment G.

*Figure 12. Existing Stormwater Management Facilities*



## **Transportation and Parking**

Meadowbrook Lane is a two-lane local road (maintained by MCDOT) that borders Meadowbrook Stables property along its eastern and southern edges. Meadowbrook Lane provides vehicular access between East-West Highway (to the north); Rock Creek Forest neighborhood (to the east); Parks Meadowbrook Maintenance Facility (to the south); and Candy Cane City Local Park to the southwest. Meadowbrook Lane is used by a variety of traffic including school buses, service/delivery vehicles, residential traffic, park traffic, and Meadowbrook Stables guests and staff. Heavier volumes of Rock Creek Forest neighborhood-

related traffic tend to occur during the weekday morning and evening rush periods, with more disbursed usage during weekends. Regular Meadowbrook-related traffic tends to be heavier during lesson hours, Tuesday-Friday from 4:00-8:00 PM and weekends from 9:30-2:30 PM. However, peak traffic occurs during horse shows at the facility, which occur three times per year.

A 20-space parking area, designated for Meadowbrook Stables use, is located along the eastside of Meadowbrook Lane, across from the historic barn. Other on-street parking is allowed on an adjacent service lane (parallel to Meadowbrook Lane) and along Washington Avenue, which intersects with Meadowbrook Lane; however, on-street parking (other than in the lot) is prohibited along Meadowbrook Lane itself. Overflow Meadowbrook event parking (three times per year during horse shows) is allowed in the grassy open area to the north of the barn, as well as in the Candy Cane City parking lot. Peak occupancy periods in the Meadowbrook lot tend to occur during the lesson hours stated above.

Pedestrian and bicycle activity occur primarily along the Rock Creek Trail, though pedestrians and bicycles also utilize Washington Avenue and other neighborhood streets. The trail is aligned along the north- and westside of Meadowbrook Lane adjacent to the Stables property, extending between Georgetown (Washington, DC) and Lake Needwood in Rockville, Maryland. Meadowbrook visitors and patrons regularly cross Meadowbrook Lane between the parking lot and the Stables property. Crosswalks exist across Meadowbrook Lane at its intersection with Washington Avenue and across Meadowbrook Lane at the southeast corner of the property to demarcate locations where motorists can expect more regular street crossings.

The covered arena would not increase existing programming at Meadowbrook Stables, since that is limited by the lease agreement with M-NCPPC. As such, there will not be any project impacts to existing traffic and parking activity over the long-term. During construction, there will be some increase in traffic on Meadowbrook Lane. Equipment and material deliveries will enter the property through the southern gate and all construction-related traffic will park on the Meadowbrook Stables property. Construction staging, including all materials and equipment, will be on the southern-most parking area on the property, directly across the interior gravel driveway from Ring C. Fixed weekday work hours, regular communication between Meadowbrook and the community, strict adherence to the Montgomery County Noise Ordinance as required by the Park Construction Permit, and the relatively short duration of project construction (8-12 weeks) will help minimize adverse impacts to traffic and parking.

### **Neighborhood Visual Impacts**

The new arena will be visible from several residences on Abilene Drive, as well as from ground-level vantage points along the Rock Creek Trail and Meadowbrook Lane. The arena roof stands 32-feet high at the roof peak, and a cupola will stand 41-feet and 8 inches in height at the center of the roof line. Residences with views of Ring C today will see the facades and roof of the proposed arena as depicted in Figures 13 – 14 below, in addition to trees and vegetation, both the existing landscape that will be preserved and new plantings that will be added. People will still be able to see horse activity inside the arena from their ground-level vantage points, as well as continue to see horse activity in Rings A and B.

The current design was developed collaboratively with Meadowbrook and Parks historians/planners/ engineers/architects/landscape architects to create a building that is compatible with the historic barn and adjacent structures and will fit in to the look and feel of the overall campus nestled into the larger Rock Creek Park setting. Design elements that will make



the building contextually appropriate include a stone skirt around the base, traditional multi-pane windows, historic design exterior lighting fixtures, compatible trim around windows and doors, and three cupolas on the roof. In addition, existing vegetation and new landscaping will help screen the new pavilion from off-site views. Significant landscaping will be added to the Stables grounds including native trees, sedges, grasses and shrubs appropriate to the site.

*Figure 13. Illustrative View from Abilene Drive/Neighborhood Facing West*



*Figure 14. Illustrative View from Meadowbrook Lane and Rock Creek Trail Facing South*



## **Dust and Lighting**

The covered arena will result in reduced ambient dust to the surrounding community through the more controlled interior environment of the new structure. The new structure will shield the

riding area from sunlight and wind, thereby reducing evaporation, as well as allow easier watering of the riding ring surface with a tractor-pulled water sprinkler.

The project proposes to remove 20 of the existing 40-foot tall light poles around Ring C, which will be replaced with interior lighting that will be better directed to the riding area. The riding ring cover will dramatically reduce light spill to the surrounding area.

### **Impacts on Archaeological and Other Historic Resources**

In 2019, Montgomery Parks archaeologists assessed the potential impacts that the Meadowbrook Stables Phase II project would have on archaeological resources within the proposed project area. The assessment consisted of a review of previous archaeological investigations, geotechnical investigations, analysis of archaeological prehistoric potential, a survey of registered archaeological sites and properties on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and the Montgomery County Master Plan.

Although there are two archaeological sites recorded in the project area, a 1996 Phase I archaeological report concluded that due to previous disturbance from recreational activity and the absence of diagnostic artifacts, no further archaeological work was recommended. The 2019 geotechnical investigation found that the ground surface consists of fill soils that go to a depth of up to six feet. Analysis of the Prehistorical Potential Model shows that the project is not in an area of high potential for prehistoric archaeological resources. In 2003, the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) found that Meadowbrook Stables Phase I would have no adverse effects on historical or archeological resources. Montgomery Parks' 2019 review for Phase II concludes that the proposed project will not impact archaeological resources (Attachment H).

Since 2003, the park activity building (PAB) from the 1930s at Meadowbrook Local Park has been designated as an historic resource, (Number 36/090 Rock Creek Recreation Center) on the *Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. The PAB is located approximately one-half mile south of Meadowbrook Stables, along Meadowbrook Lane adjacent to the Candy Cane City playground. However, the PAB is separated from the Stables property by Meadowbrook Lane and a stand of mature forest, so the new arena will not be visible from the PAB and vice versa.

### **Lease Addendum, Development Agreement**

The existing Lease between Meadowbrook the Stables and Montgomery Parks expires on August 31, 2030. Upon receipt of final construction drawings, the Lease will be amended through Parks Property Management group to update the terms. The 2003 Development Agreement requires an addendum to update the design and location details, memorialize the addition of the new improvements and Meadowbrook Stables' capital outlay for construction.

### **Cost and Operating Budget Impacts**

All costs associated with the design and construction of the covered arena and associated improvements (estimated \$1.5M) will be paid by the Meadowbrook Foundation through charitable contributions.

## ADA Compliance

Figure 15. ADA parking and access to pavilion viewing area





## STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND CONDITIONS

The Department of Parks has collaborated with Meadowbrook Stables over the past six months to create a proposed covered arena that is responsive to the demonstrated needs of our public-private partner while it also addresses the issues and concerns raised by staff, government agencies, and the public. Environmental impacts have been addressed through a combination of better location, innovative building design, stormwater management facilities and planting new vegetation. The change in the view of Ring C from some adjacent homes and Rock Creek Trail users has been mitigated by designing a building that is compatible with the historic and agricultural equestrian campus and by preserving and enhancing the vegetative buffer on the east side of the new building.

Staff requests Planning Board approval of the Meadowbrook Stables Phase II Concept Plan for a covered riding arena on Ring C with the following conditions:

- Enter into a Lease addendum meeting Parks requirements
- Obtain all required Local, State, and Federal permits prior to construction
- Maintain an updated website with information regarding the construction with contact information for the public
- Obtain Park Construction Permit prior to construction

## Attachments

- A. Parks Website FAQ Document
- B. Town Hall Full Report with Comments
- C. Other public comments submitted
- D. NCPC Staff Report, Final Environmental Assessment, and Finding of No Significant Impact
- E. Maryland Historical Trust Historic Impact Form Approval
- F. Floodplain Report and MDE Authorization to Proceed
- G. Stormwater Management Plan
- H. Montgomery Parks Archeological Review Form

cc:

Gary Burnett, Acting Chief, Southern Region  
Jai Cole, Division Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship  
Joey Lampl, Cultural Resources Manager  
Julie Mueller, Cultural Resources Planner Coordinator  
Erin McArdle, Engineer, Park Development  
Samantha Shron, Architect, Park Development  
Michele Grace, Property Management  
Jim Poore, Division Chief, Facilities Management  
Doug Stephens, Principal Natural Resources Specialist  
Sean Harbaugh, Regional Operations Manager, Southern Region

Signature:



Email: [miti.figueredo@montgomeryparks.org](mailto:miti.figueredo@montgomeryparks.org)

Signature:



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# PB Memo for 5/14: Meadowbrook Stables Phase II

Final Audit Report

2020-05-05

Created:	2020-05-01
By:	Emily Mitchell (Emily.Mitchell@montgomeryparks.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAWaJhbl7zG7Jv2X0CplbkU7ip5tIF7F2t

## "PB Memo for 5/14: Meadowbrook Stables Phase II" History

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2020-05-01 - 8:45:29 PM GMT- IP address: 208.76.119.66
-  Document emailed to Miti Figueredo (miti.figueredo@montgomeryparks.org) for signature  
2020-05-01 - 8:46:48 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Miti Figueredo (miti.figueredo@montgomeryparks.org)  
2020-05-02 - 3:00:01 PM GMT- IP address: 174.192.196.142
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2020-05-04 - 5:13:14 PM GMT- IP address: 104.47.41.254
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Signature Date: 2020-05-04 - 5:14:09 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 173.79.65.182
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2020-05-04 - 6:46:58 PM GMT- IP address: 104.47.40.254
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Signature Date: 2020-05-05 - 5:48:44 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 173.79.250.172
-  Signed document emailed to Brenda Sandberg (brenda.sandberg@montgomeryparks.org), Sandra Samuel (Sandra.Samuel@montgomeryparks.org), Mike Riley (mike.riley@montgomeryparks.org), Emily Mitchell (Emily.Mitchell@montgomeryparks.org), and 2 more  
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