

**Supplement #1****Summary of Revisions to the Parks, Trails and Public Spaces Section of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Public Hearing Draft**

January 5th, 2021

Introduction

This supplement summarizes the revisions to the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan Public Hearing Draft – Section 4.5 - Parks, Trails and Public Spaces - based on community comments received and discussions with the Planning Board at Work Sessions on December 9 and 23, 2021. Most of the changes were already approved during the PB Work Session on December 23. The slides to be presented to the Board on January 6 at the Work Session #4 will focus on changes from the December 23 Work Session only and will be marked accordingly in this supplement.

Given the condensed schedule of the review of the Planning Board Draft on January 6, this supplement is being provided in advance and captures all major final text and language revisions to recommendations found in the Parks section.

New text is shown with an underline.

The revisions to the Parks section address the following:

- Text revisions to align language with the ongoing update to the 2022 PROS Plan with a particular focus on physical activity and social connections. A lot of the text changes were focused on the reorganization and consolidation of the existing content to prioritize the goals and recommendations established by the on-going PROS Plan. Text revisions to allow more flexibility on the Parks Classification text considering changes on the on-going PROS Plan.
- Text revisions to highlight equity in parks.
- Minor edits to align with land use recommendations.

In addition to the revisions and additions in this memo, section numbers and formatting will be updated throughout the document. Graphics will be improved for clarity and to better align with revised recommendations. Photos and other illustrative graphics will be added for clarity. Typos, math errors and other scrivener's errors will be corrected. Tables will be updated to reflect updated recommendations. These corrections occur throughout the document.

4.5 Parks, Trails and Public Spaces

Revised and reorganized introductory text to align language with the ongoing update to the 2022 PROS Plan with a particular focus on physical activity and social connections – p. 72:

The plan envisions a community where it is easy and irresistible for all residents, visitors, and workers to enjoy a network of welcoming, multi-use parks, trails, and public spaces. Parks and public spaces, especially those in urban areas like Silver Spring are a platform for community experiences and interaction. Urban parks support the quality of life of residents of all ages, races, cultures, income levels, and physical abilities.

As participants noted during the public engagement process, Silver Spring needs more parks and public spaces, especially spaces for active recreation.

The goals and recommendations for this plan were developed in concert with policy guidance from previous and ongoing plans including the *2010 Silver Spring CBD Green Space Guidelines*, the *2017 PROS Plan*, the *2018 Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan*, *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, and *2022 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan (on-going)*, in addition to community input received during the planning process who voiced the importance of parks and public spaces in their quality of life.

The goals and recommendations below support the plan’s overall themes of diversity, connectivity, resiliency, and community health.

4.5.1 Goals

Revised, reorganized, and consolidated goals text to align language with the ongoing update to the 2022 PROS Plan with a particular focus on physical activity and social connections – p. 72. This subsection will be entirely replaced with the following revisions and additions:

- **Encourage physical activity** by providing safe and convenient access to an interconnected, multi-functional, and comfortable network of parks, public spaces, and trails connecting people to jobs, centers of activity, and nature.
- **Facilitate social interaction** by developing parks that offer easy opportunities for daily impromptu interactions with neighbors and organized social gatherings.
- **Steward the environment within the urban context** by creatively integrating sustainable strategies to adapt to and mitigate climate change and maintaining our commitment to environmental stewardship.
- **Promote economic prosperity** by creating fun and appealing park facilities and programming that energize Silver Spring, while celebrating its rich history and vibrant culture.

4.5.2 Recommendations

Revised, reorganized, and consolidated recommendations text to align language with the ongoing update to the 2022 PROS Plan with a particular focus on physical activity, social connections, and equity p.74-75. The previous recommendations were consolidated into three major recommendations: equity,

green loop connectivity and creative implementation. This subsection will be entirely replaced with the following revisions and additions:

The recommendations of this Plan create an urban, social, active, and healthy community for all, and will strengthen the role of parks and recreation regarding physical activity, social connections, environmental stewardship, economic competitiveness, and racial equity.

Equity: Everybody's backyard – promote a fair distribution of attractive, safe, and fun parks and public spaces as common civic spaces with facilities and programming open to all ages, race, culture, income, and abilities.

- **More Active Recreation** - Add additional park facilities and programs that promote physical activity, including in small spaces, with introduction of basketball hoops, ping-pong tables, interactive art, areas for hopscotch games, tai chi, and other activities that keep people moving and meeting each other. The results of the EPS Plan analysis (see Appendix D) show that the plan area particularly lacks active recreation experiences. The need is especially great in the center of downtown where the shortage of active experiences is higher.
- **“Right park in the right places”** - Parks will be designed to accommodate major functions, but all should provide social, active and nature-based experiences to the extent possible. Ensure a fair distribution of the park experiences across the various districts of this sector plan. Parks should be located near transit, accessible by walking and biking, and surrounded by active building frontages. See Section 4.5.4 for proposed park locations.
- **Multifunctional Spaces** - Facilitate the creation of new and the renovation of existing parks and public spaces that accommodate multiple needs, including recreation, education, community-building, and environment stewardship within the urban context.

- For example, community gardens in Silver Spring promote social engagement and physical activity in high-density areas to a diverse population in addition to providing access to fresh and healthy foods. Fenton Street Urban Park will be consolidated with the existing community garden which will be expanded and integrated with additional land dedication and acquisition. Proposed and existing community gardens are identified in section 4.5.4.

Note: To broaden the flexibility of experiences proposed within the Fenton Street Urban Park, this paragraph originally presented under the sub header: “access to healthy food” on December 23 was moved to this sub header instead.

- Consider co-location, adaptive reuse, joint programming, and shared use of land, buildings, and facilities whenever possible to optimize limited available land. This Plan recommends the renovation of the largest park inside the sector plan – Jesup Blair Park – to bring new and renovate existing amenities, add an intense programming, and welcome future and existing park users to gather as a community in this regional destination.
- **Celebrate Silver Spring's Culture and History** - Promote facilities that celebrate cultural and historic aspects of the community, serve the distinct social connection needs of seniors,

teenagers, young adults and people with disabilities and contribute to the sense of pride and ownership of parks. The proposed Cultural Art Loop in Jesup Blair park will be a venue to celebrate the more inclusive Silver Spring history proposed in this Plan. See Section 4.9.6 Cultural and Heritage Resources.

- **Access to nature and future stewards** – Expand the urban tree canopy coverage and pervious surfaces in parks and public spaces, both publicly and privately owned. Promote watershed connectivity through education and best stormwater management practices. See more info on this recommendation at section 4.7 - Resilient Downtown.
- **Promote the creation of “Friends of” organizations** in major parks and public spaces. Engage the community early in the planning, programming and design of parks and public spaces to ensure the resulting place is meaningful and reflective of community identity. Engage stakeholders such as property owners, developers, non-profit groups, community members, artists, and public agencies to collaborate in delivering creative solutions and development strategies. Work with the community and schools to develop early advocacy programs and activities to encourage nature appreciation, education, and stewardship.

Green Loop Connectivity - Implement the proposed Green Loop to connect existing and proposed parks and public spaces with other land uses inside the Plan and the surrounding region promoting walking and biking to these places with comfortable, sustainable, safe and shaded roads, sidewalks and trails.

- **All parks and public spaces** - Ensure access to all parks and public spaces – including POPS – that are designed to support casual, impromptu use, and connection with nature and other land uses.
- **Wayfinding** – Improve signage and wayfinding of parks, public spaces, and trails; consider partnering with future commercial/businesses organizations to create a public space map and signage for the proposed Green Loop and the open space network in Silver Spring.
- **Integrate amenities with walking loops** – Promote physical activity, people watching, social connections and integration of amenities and parks and public spaces with internal walking loops inside public spaces and through connections to the proposed Green Loop, respectively.

Creative Implementation - Temporary/Interim Pilot Spaces - Consider short-term/temporary solutions and “pop-up” programming that reflect community identity within temporary/interim parks. Consider empty lots, surface parking areas or other opportunity sites adjacent to the Green Loop as potential pilot sites.

4.5.3 Equity in Parks and Public Spaces Implementation

Revisions on the definition of Experience Improvements Areas p. 75

Experience Improvement Areas: The EIA map shows areas where low experience scores are spatially clustered. Experience scores were determined by calculating the ratio and scoring of accessible public space experiences to the number of people capable of walking to them from a specific location. See more information on this map on Appendix D.

Add revised text from 4.5.2 on equity recommendation p.73 as the first bullet under recommendations

- **Equity: Everybody's backyard** – promote a fair distribution of attractive, safe, and fun parks and public spaces as common civic spaces with facilities and programming open to all ages, race, culture, income, and abilities.

4.5.4 Proposed Park Locations and Recommendations

Revisions to be presented to PB on January 6. Revised overall language on the current park classification and recommendations text to align language with the ongoing update to the 2022 PROS Plan with a particular focus on allowing flexibility on the Parks Classification terminologies to withstand future PROS Plan revisions. Subsequently, the use of current 2017 PROS Plan Parks Classification terminologies will be limited to the description paragraph of each park classification associated alphabetically. The naming of the proposed parks, in general associated to the Districts' names, will carry only the word "park" in front of it to allow more flexibility when changes in the PROS Plan Parks Classification are adopted in the future: p75-91.

Revisions on the specific park Vision descriptions language were approved on December 23.

The 2017 and 2022 PROS Plans and the 2018 EPS Plan state that each area master plan should recommend an interconnected system of parks that achieve multiple objectives. The parks and facilities size, primary and supporting functions should be directly proportional to the projected density and land use patterns of the community.

Map 19 illustrates the proposed parks and public space's location within an interconnected network through the Green Loop system. The designation of active recreation destinations, Civic Green, Plaza, Neighborhood Greens, etc., is to highlight the major function emphasis but not to limit other experiences. All parks should provide social, active, and nature-based experiences to the extent possible across the various districts of this Plan.

The following proposed park locations approach should be applied to Silver Spring:

For the Sector Plan Area:

- Opportunities for active, contemplative, and social gathering experiences within parks
- Central civic spaces emphasizing social gatherings
- Interconnected system of sidewalks and trails to connect parks and open spaces through the proposed Green Loop
- Wooded areas that will provide a sense of contact with nature

For each Urban District: walk-to recreational amenities

In addition, the park recommendations also incorporate community input, previous studies, legacy infrastructure, localized needs, location of Experience Improvement Areas (EPS Plan methodology), Equity Focus Areas (Thrive 2050) and other factors to deliver the "right parks in the right places".

The on-going 2022 PROS Plan will be revising the Park Classification system associated with the Proposed Park Locations approach. The further subcategories of the proposed park recommendations are based on the 2017 PROS Plan Parks Classification. All urban parks should be located strategically to allow access by walking and biking to and from public transit and other

complementary land uses to support the goals of encouraging physical activity, facilitating social connection, accessing nature and promoting economic prosperity.

The current naming of the proposed parks and public spaces is subject to change and will be defined during the implementation phase of the project.

A - Civic Green: Parks and Public spaces that emphasize social gathering. They are flexible, programmable gathering spaces for informal or large special events. Depending on size, they may support open air markets, concerts, festivals, and/or special events. A large central lawn is often the focus, sometimes with a complementary plaza space, with adjacent spaces providing complementary uses such as gardens, water features and/or shade structures. Supporting functions might include opportunities for physical activity and nature enjoyment.

A1 - Create: Ripley District Park

Vision: ... The main programming of this space will be flexible to accommodate a variety of experiences such as community events, unstructured recreation in a central lawn, activities that encourage physical activity and places for nature interaction and contemplation. Provide a balance of sunny and shaded areas. Explore interactive installations with education component and visitor amenities. *(Note: revisions to the Vision description approved on December 23).*

A3 - Create: Blair Park/The Terrace (currently approved under The Blairs Master Plan)

Vision: ... Explore interactive installations with education component, visitor amenities, and active recreation opportunities. *(Note: revisions to the Vision description approved on December 23).*

B - Plaza: These spaces align with and complement the Civic Green urban parks subcategory. These spaces also emphasize social gathering. The main differences are (1) a central hardscape area surrounded by supporting facilities that should encourage physical activity and nature enjoyment instead of a central lawn, and (2) the location generally near transit stops and/or commercial and higher density residential areas. They should face streets and building frontages to maximize pedestrian use and exposure and have access to sunlight. Plazas may support activities including open air markets, concerts, festivals, and special events.

C – Countywide Urban Recreational Park: Oriented to the recreational needs of surrounding neighborhoods and districts, this type of park provides space for many activities. Athletic fields, playing courts, picnic areas, dog parks, sitting areas and flexible grassy open spaces may all be common in this park subcategory. Programming might include farmer’s markets, outdoor exercise classes, and/or community yard sales, etc. There should be space for safe drop-offs and integrated accessible parking for those who cannot walk to the park. Physical activity is the main emphasis of this park, but social and contemplative opportunities should also be considered.

C1 - Renovate: Jesup Blair Park

The first 3 paragraphs remain the same: Vision, overall description, and Concept Plan. The rest of the recommendations were reorganized and revised to align with language from the on-going 2022 PROS

Plan and PB Comments on December 9th. Below are the specific paragraphs that changed following revisions and additions approved by the Board on December 23rd p.80-85.

Improve physical and visual access to the park by:

- **Wayfinding: Signage and Public Art along Fenton Street** – Pursue collaboration with Montgomery College to improve visibility of the only entrance to the park along Fenton Street at pedestrian bridge. Install signages along Metropolitan Branch Trail and below the pedestrian bridge with distances to the park to direct users to this entrance. Consider partnering with storage facility property owner to install a public art mural to provide more visibility to the entrance ramp area and instigate people to explore what is across the rails. ...
- **Pedestrian Network Improvements:** Consider implementing traffic calming features along Blair Road to make it more safe, accessible, and comfortable. Work with SHA/MCDOT to add new and renovate existing pedestrian crossings: (1) at both ends of the park along Georgia Avenue to improve the pedestrian access and experience across this busy road and connect to the small businesses along that stretch of Georgia Avenue; (2) Blair Road at the edge of the park boundary to allow pedestrians safe crossing to the park entrances along Blair Road – see proposed location on the illustrative concept and in Section 4.6 – Transportation. If development patterns along and surrounding Blair Road change in the long term, and traffic calming measurements are already in place, consider working with MCDOT and SHA to study the feasibility of a closure of Blair Road along the perimeter of Jesup Blair Park on weekends and/or weekdays. It would allow expansion of the proposed active zone at the southern portion of the park and would allow direct connection to Juniper Blair Neighborhood Park across the street expanding the zone for recreation and social interactions.
- **Art Crossings:** Work with SHA/MCDOT to consider art treatment of the two pedestrian crossings along Georgia Avenue as well as improvements on links to the POPS along Jesup Blair Drive to mark the park entrances and transition to other pedestrian destinations.

Promote social connection, diversity, community health, identity, and sense of ownership

- **Strong Programming** – promote a robust programming for the park with activities and events that can appeal to a diverse audience and invite people back to explore the park on their own.
- **Multifunctional Spaces** – encourage multi-use spaces such as lawn, play areas and courts instead of specialized uses. The existing central soccer field would continue to work as a central lawn space (that still hold a good size for informal soccer games) and multi-age play area. The transformation of this local park into a countywide destination park will allow its facilities and spaces to serve a much larger and diverse audience during large events. The park infrastructure should also consider the daily or weekly use of locals. Consider including space for community-scale events such as performances and farmer’s markets. Allow space for kiosks and community bulletin boards, cafes, or street vendors.
- Create a **variety of experience zones** inside this large park emphasizing active, social, and contemplative areas, making the park a destination place with many things to do for different age groups, interests, and abilities. ...

- **Historic setting** – ... Identify future partner who will help activate the contemplative zone potential to attract users to the park and gain community support to steward its unique historic setting and enjoy the many activities inside the park.
- **Cultural Art Loop** – create a signature internal active, recreational, and cultural art trail loop with mileage marks, historic signage, art, benches, a mix of shaded and sunny areas and fitness equipment along its path inside Jesup Blair park to integrate the existing and future proposed recreational facilities and encourage physical exercise.

Note: Special Park classification sentence was removed from the main text p.80 to broaden the flexibility on the park classification descriptions.

D – Community Use Urban Recreational Park (updated from Urban Recreational Parklet) - These parks serve the immediate neighborhood. Physical activity is the main emphasis of this park, but social and contemplative opportunities should also be considered. Typical facilities include smaller sport courts, skating spots, and may include lawns, playgrounds, or similar neighborhood recreation facilities. Sizes vary considerably depending on the land available and community size served.

D1 – Create: South Silver Spring Park

Vision: Key active recreation destination in the South Silver Spring District. Different from Jesup Blair park, this urban recreational park will be a local destination. Its direct connection to the central green loop will promote complementary active facilities to other recreational parks being proposed in this Plan. Montgomery Parks is under contract on one of the two property parcels and expects to own the property by the end of 2021. (Note: revisions to the Vision description approved on December 23).

E - Neighborhood Green: This park is very flexible and supports social connections, physical activities, and access to nature. The park provides spaces for informal gatherings, lunchtime relaxation, or small special event gatherings. A lawn, play area, shaded seating, pathways, and wooded areas are typical features.

E2 – Create: Fenton Village Park

Vision: Hanging out space for the community along Fenton Street, this park in conjunction with the Fenton Street Park will activate and serve the district commercial corridors and residents. The community will have a place to gather and celebrate their diverse identity and character. This site is also large enough that it may provide a unique opportunity to consider urban agriculture facilities, either at the ground or as part of a green roof concept in alignment with the recommendations found in Section 4.7.8. (Note: revisions to the Vision description approved on December 23).

E3 – Create: Ellsworth District Park (change in the name to add the word “District”)

E4 – Create: F Park & Connect: Falkland Stream Restoration to north parcel

Vision: Create a visual and physical connection between the stream valley renovation in the southeast quadrant of the Falklands to a consolidated public use spaces on the north parcel that is green and clearly public in nature. Consider adding wayfinding signage to address the entries to these publicly accessible spaces.

Size: minimum 0.5 acre of consolidated open space *(Note: revisions to the Vision and Size descriptions approved on December 23. This recommendation was updated to align with changes made on the urban design section.)*

F - Pocket Green: This smaller park will allow for “pauses” with a landscaped setting along the streets between larger parks within the parks and public spaces network. Research has suggested that smaller breaks during the work schedule increases productivity and health, especially mental health.

Pocket Greens are particularly important in areas where commercial activities are taking place. Due to its small scale, the space should be highly visible from the street and include protection from the wind, traffic and noise allowing workers to take a lunch or coffee break while enjoying a contemplative environment with pedestrians strolling by. They can provide seating, areas to eat or read, and small play areas or game areas. This park will serve nearby residents, workers, and visitors.

F1 – Renovate: Acorn Park

Vision: Contemplative historic pocket green. Its proximity to the proposed South Silver Spring Park can promote a synergy of park users experiences: from the historic and contemplative setting of Acorn Park to the more active and social-driven space on the new proposed recreational park. Activate public park, possibly in partnership with nearby POPS.

In Summer 2020, as part of the Shared Street program, MCDOT closed Newell St between Kennett Street and East-West Highway to expand recreational opportunities to residents and businesses. The street closure allows users of Acorn Park to enjoy a larger play area increasing park usage and stewardship of its historic asset. Newell Street can function as a temporary park until the proposed South Silver Spring Park project gets implemented. In Section 4.6.5 of this Plan, this segment is recommended to be a shared street. *(Note: revisions to the Vision description approved on December 23).*

F3 – Retain: King Street Park

Location: South Silver Spring District

Ownership: POPS, leased to M-NCPPC

Vision: Retain existing community garden at the western end of the parcel on the 7980 Georgia Avenue site as part of any redevelopment opportunity. Connect community garden to proposed through-block connection.

Size: ~0.38 acre

(Note: new text added and approved on December 23).