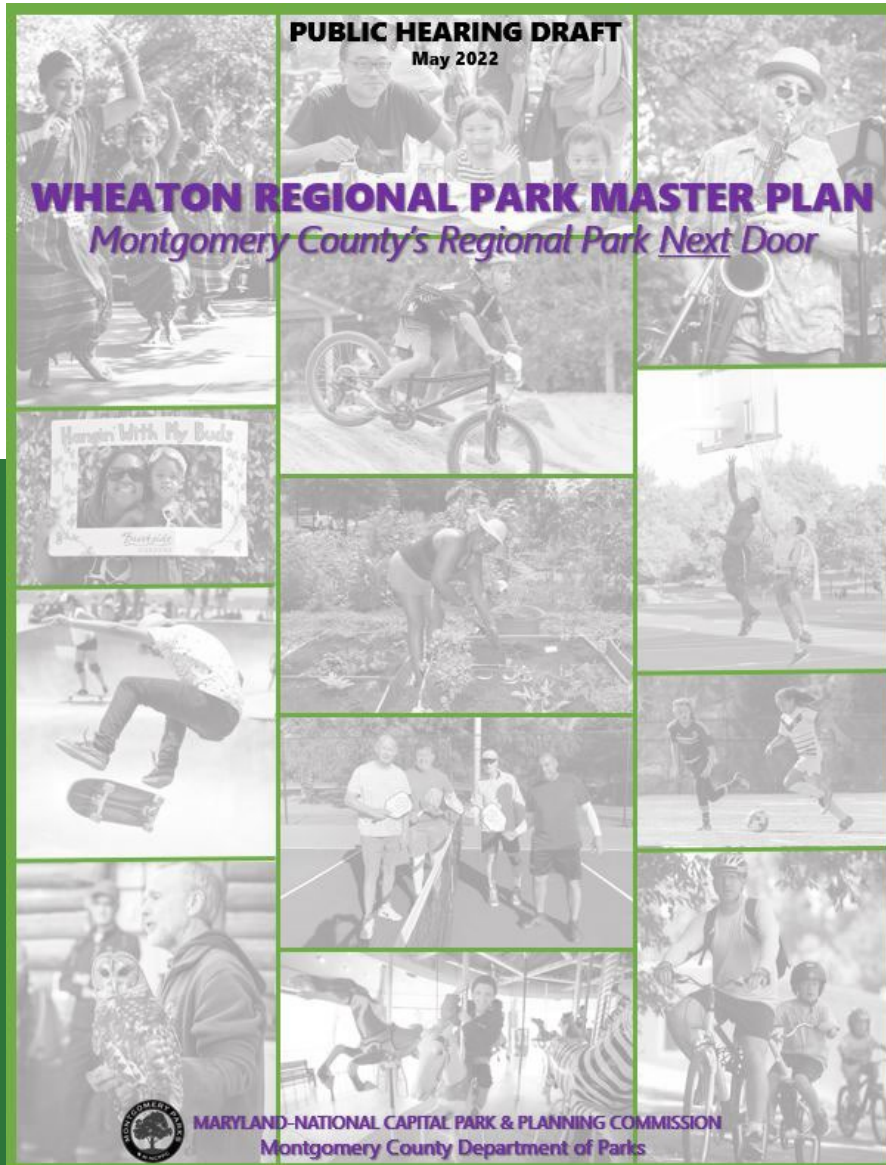


MONTGOMERY PARKS

Work Session #2 for 2022 Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan



During this work session, staff will present new proposed plan language for the Board's review in response to their comments and direction during the work session on June 9th. Staff asks the Board to approve the new language and associated maps and approve the final plan as well.





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SUMMARY

- On June 9, 2022, staff summarized public testimony on the draft plan and led the Planning Board in discussions about the seven topics on which there were the most comments. For some topics, staff recommended no changes to current recommendations. But staff recommended new plan language on certain topics in response to comments received. The Planning Board also requested some changes to plan language.
- During this work session, staff will present new proposed plan language and associated maps for the Board's review in response to their comments and direction during the work session on June 9th.
- Staff asks the Board to approve the new language and to also approve the final plan as well.

Review of Work Session #1

On June 9th, staff led the Board in discussions about the following topics on which the most comments/testimony were received.

1. Tennis courts/Pickleball courts
2. Wheaton Park Stables & Equestrian Trails
3. Mountain biking on natural surface trails
4. Bird habitat/birding experience
5. Natural resources
6. Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access
7. Noise and traffic impacts

For your convenience, see staff report from June 9 (Attachment 1). The Board approved staff recommendations for items 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Below is a summary of Board comments and direction to staff for Items 2 and 3.

Staff will present new recommended language for Wheaton Park Stables during our presentation on June 23. New recommended plan language and associated maps for natural surface trails can be found below.

Wheaton Park Stables (WPS)

Staff recommendation on June 9th: Retain plan recommendations but add language to clarify what is meant by “short-term” and “longer-term” and describe and better explain our rationale for plan recommendations.

Board response: We need more data and information about the facility condition and anticipated costs for improvements. Remove language from the plan about potential future uses. Be clear on future expectations of WPS to share cost burdens as well as the level of public subsidy required to help keep WPS operating successfully.

Discussion: During today’s work session, staff will present new language for the section of the plan regarding the Equestrian Center/Wheaton Park Stables.

Mountain Biking/Natural Surface Trails

Staff recommendation on June 9th: Retain current plan recommendations to allow mountain biking on certain natural surface trails to make them fully multi-use consistent with the 2016 CTPP, and keep some trails limited use.

Board response: Concerned about potential conflicts between mountain bikers and novice equestrians (WPS patrons who have physical, emotional and/or intellectual disabilities). Consider making just the upper part of the Outer Loop Trail open to mountain bikers, to allow bike access from Northwest Branch Trail to Arcola Trail but keep the rest of the Outer Loop Trail limited to hikers and equestrians. Return on June 23 with options to address concerns about potential conflicts between mountain bikers and other trail users.

Discussion: Since June 9, staff has been working on changes to the trail recommendations to address concerns raised by the Board and expressed in testimony from numerous residents and stakeholders. See Attachment 2.

The new trail recommendations, which are supported by both natural resources stewardship staff as well as WPS, include:

- Modifying the alignment of the Inner Loop Trail to make it longer and more sustainable, and designating it as limited use for only hikers and equestrians.
- Creating a new limited-use trail for hikers and equestrians from the Outer Loop Trail to the Inner Loop Trail, to make it easier for WPS patrons to access the Inner Loop Trail.
- Designating the Outer Loop Trail as fully multi-use to allow mountain biking.
- Designating a hiking-only trail between the Arcola Trail and the Inner Loop Trail, to provide nature center programming access to the Inner Loop Trail.
- Removing segments of trails that are unsustainable and/or no longer needed.

Staff will walk the Board through these new plan recommendations during today's work session.