




MONTGOMERY PARKS

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
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MontgomeryParks.org

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 30, 2023

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *MR*
Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director, Administration *MF*
Andrew Frank, Division Chief, Park Development Division (PDD) 

FROM: Ron Peele, CIP Manager, PDD *RP*

SUBJECT: Briefing on the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and Strategy for Preparing the Montgomery Parks FY25-30 CIP

APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES

In this session staff will present information on the current FY23-28 CIP and discuss the potential strategy for the development of the FY25-30 CIP. As part of this kick-off for the new CIP, staff will present some general information about the current CIP, review milestones, explore factors and conditions that will shape the new CIP, and offer an initial approach that could be employed to develop the recommended FY25-30 CIP, which must be transmitted to the County by November 1, 2023.

BACKGROUND

State law requires that the Montgomery County Council approve the CIP for the Montgomery County side of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).¹ It also requires that the Montgomery County Planning Board submit a new 6-year CIP to the County Government every odd-numbered year by November 1st, which is about six months before the council adopts the countywide CIP in May. In the months prior to the submission, the Department works with staff, the Planning Board, and the public to gather project needs, prioritize them, and program them into a working CIP. Once adopted, the CIP serves as the Park Development Plan for funding park acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and restoration over the next six years.

What is the Capital Improvement Program?

The CIP is a 6-year plan for appropriating funds for parks facilities, infrastructure, and land. The County Executive reviews the requested CIP from each agency and department and issues a recommended CIP on January 15th of each year. The Council reviews agency and departmental requests with the Executive's recommendation, public input, and fiscal constraints to reconcile these factors to set the ultimate funding levels. The current updated FY23-28 CIP (totaling \$296M) was adopted by County Council on May 25, 2023. Other facts include the following:

- A new full CIP is adopted every even numbered year
- The adopted CIP is updated biennially (every odd numbered year)
- The Council concurrently sets the capital and operating budgets for each fiscal year (July 1st through June 30th)

Funding comes from a variety sources, including GO Bonds (county-issued), Current Revenue (county taxes), Park Bonds (M-NCPPC-issued), State Aid (i.e., Legislative Bond Initiatives and Local Parks and

Playgrounds Infrastructure grants), and Federal Grants (e.g., Community Project Funds and other grants).

What does the CIP do?

The CIP enables Parks to make strategic investments in real estate and physical elements that make up the park system. More specifically, the CIP funds:

- Acquisition and creation/rehabilitation of property, infrastructure, amenities, and environmental resources throughout Montgomery Parks.
- Projects that are wide-ranging and aim to promote safety, enhance park user experiences, prolong useful life of assets, enhance natural resources, and adapt amenities to meet emerging trends.
- Capital improvements typically costing \$30k+ with a 15+ year service life. Smaller and/or temporary projects are funded by the operating budget.

What is the Capital Budget?

The Capital Budget is the actual authorization from the County Council to spend funds for the next fiscal year, and it is the aggregate of all appropriation requests for a fiscal year. It is adopted every year and must always be consistent with the CIP, so if it is changed from the previously adopted CIP, the existing 6-year CIP is amended as well. In FY24 (starts on July 1, 2023) Parks Capital Budget totals ~\$52M. Projects/programs in the CIP are described on Project Description Forms (PDFs), of which there are two main types:

- Stand-Alone projects – These are projects that have a defined beginning and end (e.g., construction of a new park or a major park renovation)
- Level-of-Effort (LOE) projects– These are programs that continue indefinitely and supports various smaller projects of a similar nature (e.g., trail renovations, ballfield improvements, ADA improvements, or stream restoration).

ROADMAP FOR THE NEXT CIP: FY25-30

The CIP process begins approximately a year and a half before it goes into effect. Some of the major milestones include:

- Reviewing Department-wide project requests (Spring 2023)
- Prioritizing needs (Summer 2023)
- Analyzing funding scenarios (Summer/fall 2023)
- Receiving public input and conducting Planning Board work sessions to refine scenarios (September 2023)
- Obtaining Planning Board approval of the final funding request (October 2023)
- Transmitting Planning Board-adopted FY25-30 CIP request to County Executive and County Council (November 1, 2023)

Proposed Planning Board Sessions:

Sessions and public meetings with the Planning Board will include:

- CIP Background/Strategy Presentation: July 6, 2023
- Work Session #1 and CIP Forum: September 7, 2023
 - Public testimony
 - Planning Board discussion and guidance to staff

- Work Session #2: September 21, 2023
 - Review of funding scenarios for CIP projects
 - Planning Board discussion and guidance to staff
- Adoption Session: October 19, 2023
 - Adoption of final FY25-30 CIP request
 - Planning Board approval to transmit to Montgomery County Government by November 1, 2023

Initial Strategy for Developing the FY25-30 CIP:

Parks staff recommends building upon the strategic capital investments we have made throughout the Montgomery Parks system over the last 5 years. This approach is built on the following principles that provided the foundation and basis for formulating the FY23-28 CIP:

1. The CIP is a strategic plan that identifies key investments in infrastructure and amenities for the most effective allocation of limited funds.
2. The CIP is based upon a careful analysis of public recreation, open space, conservation and management needs and a realistic assessment of resources available to meet those needs.
3. The CIP emphasizes maintaining what we have by programming a consistent stream of funding for LOE projects.
4. The CIP implements the County’s master plans, functional plans, Park Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, and other studies.
5. The CIP plays a vital role in the environmental restoration of Stream Valley Parks that have been significantly degraded due to decades of development and road building.
6. The CIP concentrates funds on Equity Focus Areas that have not received adequate funding in the past and often rely heavily on public facilities for community building.

To develop the FY25-30 CIP staff recommends building on current momentum by focusing on:

- Maintaining funding for all Level of Effort projects
- Maintaining focus on smaller park renovation projects that can be delivered more quickly than Stand-Alone projects through increased implementation of Park Refreshers and Mini-Refreshers
- Increasing rehabilitation of aging infrastructure by requesting additional funding for Programmed Lifecycle Asset Replacement (PLAR)
- Continue improving safety along our parkways and trail network through traffic calming and Vision Zero strategies
- Building upon recent achievements in restoring our Stream Valley Parks by requesting additional funding for stream restoration
- Implementing the recently approved Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan through funding of priority projects to deliver new amenities in balance with rehabilitating existing infrastructure that has exceeded its service life
- Improving community access and enjoyment of Parks through increased rehabilitation of our hard surface trail network
- Developing a new park on property that will be acquired through the Purple Line project in Lyttonsville

Specific Areas for Consideration in the FY25-30 CIP:

To illustrate how this overall strategy might be applied to the formulation of the FY25-30 CIP, staff proposes the following:

- **PLAR-NL PDF**: Increase annual funding level to better meet the challenges of maintaining our aging Park system. PLAR-NL is one of the principal programs used by Montgomery Parks to maintain safe and functional parks assets. M-NCPPC will celebrate its 100th anniversary during the FY25-30 CIP, and system-wide rehabilitation is critical to ensuring that Montgomery Parks continues to serve the community well for decades to come. In addition, combine all PLAR local subprojects into the main PLAR Local Parks PDF (P967754), and all PLAR non-local subprojects into the main PLAR Non-local Parks PDF (P968755).
- **Trail Hard Surface Renovations**: Increase annual funding level to improve service delivery. Parks owns and maintains a 68-mile hard-surface trail system that is one of the most highly valued parks assets, as demonstrated through surveys and trail usage data. Recent projects, including the rehabilitation of portions of Sligo Creek Trail, have received praise from users and increasing this program would allow us to improve more miles of trails in more communities.
- **Wheaton Regional Park PDF**: Increase funding levels in each Fiscal Year to implement Master Plan elements and rehabilitate aging infrastructure. There will be several projects over many years, focusing initially on the re-development of the Rubini Complex to create the Adventure Sports Park and associated support facilities. Other projects will include court conversions, trail renovations, community connections, wayfinding signage, relocation/upgrade of bathroom facilities, access road improvements, restoration of eroded outfalls, etc.
- **Lyttonsville Civic Green PDF**: Create a GO Bond-funded Stand-Alone PDF to fund development of a new park along the new Purple Line and Capital Crescent Trail extension to Silver Spring. This is an important new facility that will serve the immediate community and provide a rest area for trail users, allowing visitors to interpret an installation of the Talbot Bridge Plaza that memorializes the historic segregation that plagued this community for many decades.
- **Streams PDF**: Continue FY24-26 annual funding level. This program was increased over several years of the FY23-28 CIP to enable Parks to implement additional projects on behalf of the County, since having Parks staff develop, manage, and oversee important water resources projects is cost-effective and efficient. Parks has successfully implemented multiple projects that provide MS4 Permit credits to the County at reduced costs to the taxpayers. Parks has developed the staffing and expertise to implement this program on a larger scale that has better achieved stewardship goals and compliance with State/Federal mandates. Furthermore, by having Parks staff take a larger role in this collective initiative, we can schedule stream restoration work with other needs throughout the Parks system (e.g., trail rehabilitation, bridge replacement, drainage improvements, riparian enhancements, etc.)
- **Parks Roads PDF**: Staff recommends the transfer of this PDF from MCDOT's budget back into Parks and an increase in annual funding. This PDF was transferred to MCDOT (Montgomery County Department of Transportation) many years ago with the expectation that it would be more efficient for one agency to maintain both county and park roads. However, in

recent years it has become clear that parkways are different than standard roadways, as their purpose is focused on accessing park amenities, allowing non-vehicular usage, interacting with trail network, and mitigating impacts to the adjacent waterways. This requires significant staff resources (both MCDOT and Parks), non-traditional application of roadway design, and potential additional costs to independently implement adjacent park projects that would otherwise be managed concurrently (e.g., parking lot rehabilitation, trail barriers, outfall restoration, etc.) Parks staff appreciates the collaboration with MCDOT but believes this transfer will benefit both agencies and allow Parks to provide this service at less overall cost to the taxpayers.

Thrive Montgomery 20250:

Both the Parks and Planning Departments have been developing plans and projects to meet the needs of Montgomery County's increasingly urbanizing and diverse population. This work includes a variety of plans and studies that will help foster, among other things, a park system that is active, socially engaging, and equitable.

One of the most significant efforts underway during this past CIP cycle is *Thrive Montgomery 2050*, a comprehensive reimagining and modernization of the county's visionary general plan, *On Wedges and Corridors* (1964). For more than five decades, under the former plan, Montgomery County has become one of the most desirable places to live and work in the United States with:

- An award-winning park system
- High-quality schools
- Forward-thinking approaches to farmland preservation
- The emergence of sophisticated urban centers and mass transit, and
- Attractive neighborhoods



Thrive Montgomery 2050 builds on this with three overarching objectives:

- Economic competitiveness,
- Racial and social equity, and
- Environmental sustainability

Parks play a significant role in achieving all three objectives. Thrive calls on parks to take on new roles to:

- Serve residents of downtowns, town centers, and other intensively developed areas
- Focus on social engagement and community building as a central role of parks and recreation
- Encourage vigorous physical activity for people of all ages, abilities, and culture

The Parks and Recreation chapter in Thrive makes the following recommendations:

- Focus on creating high quality urban parks
- Use park and recreation facilities/programs to promote active lifestyles
- Ensure that parks and recreation opportunities are readily accessible and equitably distributed
- Make social connection a central objective for parks and recreation
- Update park facility standards and acquisition strategies to support infill strategies
- Maintain high standards of environmental stewardship in park management and operations
- Integrate parks, recreation, and public spaces into economic development and placemaking strategies

2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan:

Complementing the broad array of general plans, area master plans, functional plans, special studies, and planning initiatives, the Parks Department has continued to lead in planning efforts specific to parks. This includes countywide plans, park master plans, trails plans, and other studies and initiatives. A recent effort that focuses on creating active, urban, and social parks includes the *2022 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan*, which is reviewed every five years, and is vital to Parks for several reasons including:

- It becomes part of the state's five-year Land Planning, Preservation, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP)
- It is a pre-requisite for the state to grant M-NCPPC Program Open Space funding that supports roughly 20% of the CIP
- It is the basis for park and recreation recommendations in area and park master plans
- It guides policies and priorities for park acquisition, renovation and development, recreation facility needs, natural and historic resources, and local agricultural land preservation programs

The PROS Plan identifies the core purposes of parks as encouraging physical activity, facilitating social interaction, and stewarding environmental resources. Themes of the current plan include:

- The need for more and better urban parks
- Parks must serve multiple functions
- Parks help us tell our shared story and build community
- Parks must provide responsible access to nature
- Parks must help address and mitigate climate change
- Parks must evolve to better serve:
 - Our diverse population
 - Senior citizens
 - Teenagers
 - Working-age adults

Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan:

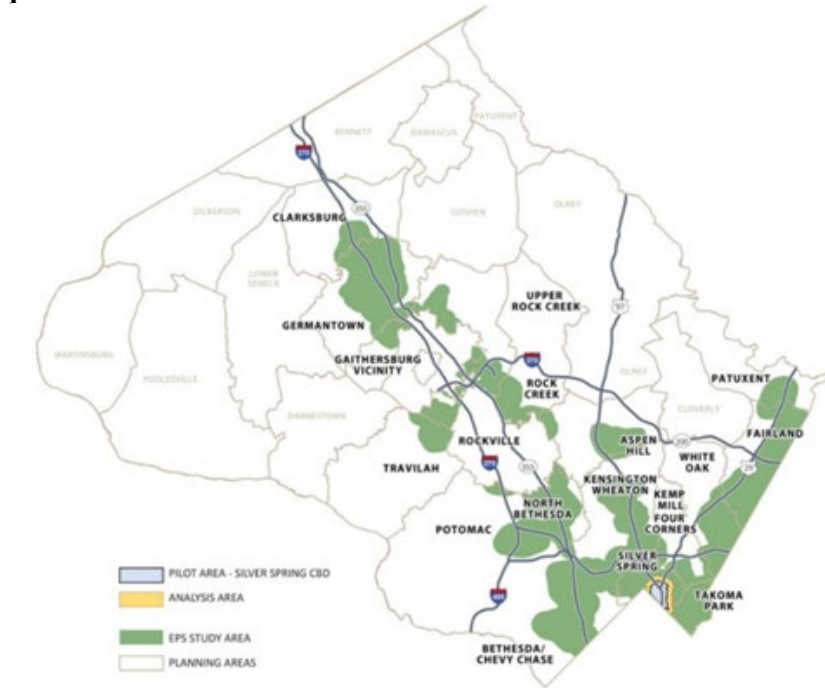


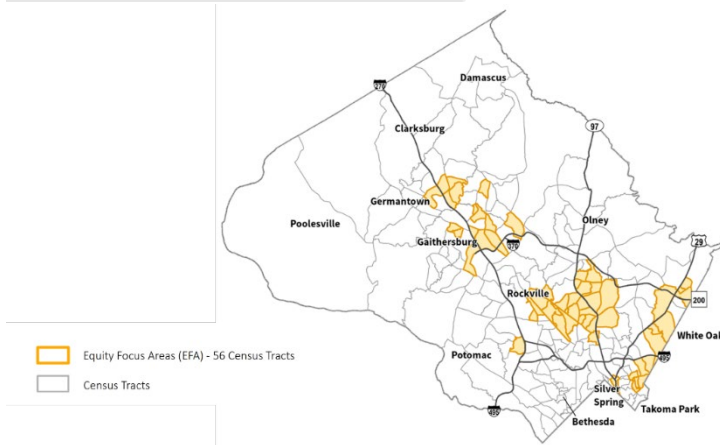
Figure 2 - Map of the EPS Study Area and Pilot Area

Energized Public Spaces (EPS) Functional Master Plan (2018) and EPS Design Guidelines (2019) – The EPS methodology helps to identify and prioritize public space and park needs in relation to population and the existing supply of park amenities. The plan is helping Montgomery Parks better identify needs, anticipate trends, and promote important goals such as health and social equity. It also provides tools to make recommendations on parks and public spaces for areas not undergoing a master plan process. In the long term, an interactive inventory of accessible public spaces and mapping of the areas with the highest needs will help Parks staff better prioritize scarce park resources.

Equity Focus Areas:

Parks has been using the Equity Focus Area tool created by a team led by the Research and Technology Division of the Planning Department and adapted to apply to the park system by the Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PDD). Earlier versions of this tool were shown to the Planning Board during the FY23-28 CIP development process. This tool identifies parts of Montgomery County that are characterized by high concentrations of lower-income people of color, who may also speak English less than very well. This data-driven tool will allow us to assess potential racial and social inequities in our CIP program.

Figure 1. Equity Focus Area (EFA) Map. As of 2020, the population within the EFA is approximately 275,875 people or 26.5% of the county population.



RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS

Entering the FY25-30 CIP formulation cycle, staff recommends that the Planning Board employ a strategy that sustains the progress achieved and builds upon that momentum by targeting improvements that maintain what we own while balancing the need for new Park facilities. The Department will continue to review and evaluate project requests and condition assessments with the strategies outlined above. Staff will begin developing funding scenarios that would implement the goals and visions of the Department and Planning Board. The Board will host a CIP Forum in early September to receive public input and continue discussions that will help guide the development of the FY25-30 CIP.

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CIP MEMORANDUM for 7-6-2023 PB Session 6-30-2023

Final Audit Report

2023-07-03

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