

Community Meeting Notes: Future Park in Lyttonsville

June 29, 2022 – Virtual Community Meeting, 7-8:30pm



Project Web site: mocoparks.org/Lyttonsville

Open Town Hall Links: MoCoParks.org/LyttonsvilleSurvey

Meeting Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGOMj4EgjsE>

Project Manager: Ching-Fang Chen, Ching-Fang.Chen@montgomeryparks.org

Parks Staff in Attendance:

- Ching-Fang Chen, Project Manager, Park Development Division (PDD)
- Patricia McManus, Design Section Manager, PDD
- Brian Lewandowski, Project Engineer, PDD
- Charles Kines, Planner Coordinator, Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PPSD)
- Shirl Spicer, History Coordinator/Museum Manager II, PPSD
- Carl Heeralal, Park Manager, Southern Parks
- Melissa Chotiner, Community Outreach and Engagement Manager, Public Affairs and Community Partnerships (PACP)
- Michelle Ramirez, Public Outreach Specialist, PACP
- Susan Stafford, Communications Director, PACP
- Trevin Sherard, Park Police Officer

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of this community meeting was to provide background information for the upcoming new neighborhood park project in Lyttonsville and gather input and ideas from the community for the park facility plan.

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with a presentation that introduced the project location, existing conditions, adjacent Purple Line and Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) projects, soil analysis and site cleanup actions, and historical and cultural background of Lyttonsville and the Talbot Avenue Bridge. Staff shared the Sector Plan's recommendations for park and public space network and preliminary program for the new park. Images of relevant examples that might be applicable to the project were shown for inspiration. An overview of the process and schedule was also discussed. Approximately 50 people participated in the meeting. Delegate Jared Solomon made brief remarks and expressed support for the project.

Staff encouraged participants to ask questions throughout the meeting in the Q&A box and contribute in the Open Town Hall survey after the meeting. A link to the survey was posted in

the chat. Following the presentation, a discussion and Q&A period allowed for community feedback.

Discussion/Q&A

Park Name: There was a comment about the community's options for suggesting a specific park name. The park name is one of the questions for which we are seeking input in the Open Town Hall survey. A few recommended names came up from the community are included in the survey. Staff encouraged the community to indicate their preference or make suggestions.

Dog Park: There was interest for having a dog park within the park. Based on the criteria identified in the Department's 2019 Dog Park Site Suitability Study, this parcel is not considered to be a suitable site for a dog park due to direct adjacency of homes. In addition, this parcel is too small to accommodate a dog park and other types of park facilities, and there is no available parking.

There is a demand for dog parks in Montgomery County, and they tend to draw people from greater distances. Until countywide needs are better met, parking spaces would be desirable to support a dog park. This site and the surrounding neighborhood streets are too small and restrictive to accommodate adequate parking, which could cause congestion on the neighboring residential streets. There are new parks proposed within the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan area that are intended for active recreational use and would provide a more suitable location for a dog park in the future.

A question was brought up about the possibility of using a portion of Rosemary Hills-Lyttonsville Local Park (RHL) for a dog park. Staff examined the prospect of adding dog amenities there, but the available space in the park is too close to single family dwellings.

Lighting: There was a question about whether solar lighting would be an option for the park. Park facilities typically close at dark, and lighting was not intended for the park. The CCT will be operated and maintained by Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), and there is a possibility it may be lit at night. Staff will examine this issue further.

Trail alignment: A question was brought up about the possibility to meander or relocate the CCT alignment other than what's shown on the Purple Line plans. The current trail alignment hugs the park boundary and is right along the edge of the Purple Line. The current alignment is the most efficient way of aligning the trail to preserve the most area for the park. Montgomery County Department of Transportation is responsible for the design of the trail, and the construction documents have been fully developed. It would be difficult to make changes to the alignment at this point in time.

Skate Features: There was a question about the potential of using skate features within the park. The proposed park should be designed to avoid conflict with other trail users. It would be possible to incorporate small skating elements that wouldn't take up too much space like a dedicated skate spot at Woodside Urban Park or a gathering destination for the skaters. This can be studied further.

Restroom: There was a request for a restroom in this park or to identify where might restrooms or portable potties might be located along CCT. Permanent restrooms are not usually included in parks except for recreational and regional parks where high level of uses are expected. Due to costs and maintenance implications, a restroom would not be part of the scope for this project. Staff will confirm whether restrooms will be incorporated in other areas along the CCT.

Water Feature: Comments were expressed about the possibility of having an accessible fountain, water feature, or water play feature in the park. M-NCPPC would consider the idea if the budget permits. Since a water line will need to be brought to the park to provide a drinking fountain, the project could explore ways to create a water feature that would be manageable and sustainable. Fountains for water play require restrooms by code, so that may limit the possibilities for the site.

Amphitheater: An amphitheater was suggested.

Amenities and experiences: A community member asked about what kind of amenities might be welcoming for young children and their parents. Staff envision the park to be welcoming, beautiful, and flexible with an emphasis to highlight the cultural and historic heritage of Lyttonsville. Anticipated amenities might include sitting areas with nice furnishings, ping pong tables or game tables, drinking fountains, trees for shade, fitness opportunities, interpretation, and historic bridge components integrated in the park for story-telling. The amenities would be multi-purpose and multi-generational to serve many people. Trail related amenities would be programmed along the edges with contemplative spaces located in the interior and towards the residential dwellings. The site has approximately 15 feet of grade change and will require terracing to accommodate the various program components. Retaining walls could be used for seating. Walls and ramps would offer opportunities for different spatial experiences. The park could be a place to stay, read, watch people, or have a conversation with neighbors and could be a pleasant stop for the trail users to take a break and enjoy the amenities.

Staff encouraged the participants to share ideas, recommend amenities, or comparable examples.

Property: Concerns were brought up about if any dwellings will be sacrificed due to the project. The project does not intend to remove any houses or nearby residences and will be working entirely within the parcel which is the current staging area for the Purple Line.

Comments were brought up about a portion of the adjacent property that was taken by the Purple Line for construction. Staff will check with the Parks Real Estate Section to follow up on the issue.

Buffer: A community member asked what will back up to the homes adjacent to the park. The project would propose to create a green buffer for the park and the immediate residences while restoring habitat for the environment and shade for people to enjoy. Establishing a vegetative buffer that is aesthetically pleasing and ecologically sound is one of the priorities for the new park. The project will collaborate with the M-NCPPC Pope Farm Nursery to import good soils, plant specimen trees and control invasive species.

Stormwater Management (SWM): Comments were expressed that the community wants the park to be green without a lot of paving. The project will implement stormwater management practices and minimize impervious surfaces to establish a holistic and healthy park environment. The SWM facilities will become a landscape feature for the park.

Soil: Site grading, drainage, capping of contaminated soil and importing new soil will be carefully engineered and implemented to make sure the park environment will be safe for the community. Contaminated soil underneath will inevitably be costly and impact the project. There was a comment about not skimping on the amenities because of the needs to mitigate contaminated soil.

Safety and Operations: There was a question about maintenance and operations of the new park. The park will be maintained and mowed by staff of the Meadowbrook Maintenance Facility. There is anticipated to be twice weekly trash collection, once on the weekend and once during the week. The timing and frequency can be adjusted based on the needs of the park.

Sargent Sherard explained how and when to report issues to the park police and the importance of reporting any problems in the park. Parks open at sunrise and close at sunset. People should not stay in parks after dark except athletic courts or fields with lighting. The community was instructed to contact the park police at 301.949.8010 to report any type of vandalism, misconduct, damage, or activities out of order. The reported crime gets classified and documented accordingly. Non-police issues will be referred to the appropriate division to handle the request. A member of the community suggested posting a sign with a phone number to call at the park. Park rules signage will be posted at both entrances to the park.

Concerns were expressed about the park being tucked away where no one would see it and that it could potentially become an isolated space. Park police will conduct a CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) assessment and provide recommendations to the design team to address lighting and safety issues during the design process. Park police encouraged neighbors to contact the park police if they observe suspicious activities after hours. The CCT is a regional trail and expects to get tremendous use. The park may become a popular stop for hikers and bikers and get a lot of use by people living in the community. Higher usage tends to keep eyes on the park and discourage inappropriate activities.

Interpretation: Staff shared ideas about possible approaches for interpreting the history and culture of Lyttonsville. Different from the traditional free-standing signs, interpretation could be combined with the furnishings or the physical elements of the park. Historic bridge components could be integrated in the space to tell the story. Multi-purpose interpretation panels could function as a fence or wall like the example shared in the presentation. The park could explore interactive interpretive approaches to bring this rich history to life, both engaging the community itself and commemorating what's taken place, perhaps involving the youth in developing the interpretive story. It will be useful to have a gathering space or amphitheater to provide programming opportunities for cultural events.

Schedule: the project schedule is dependent upon the Purple Line construction schedule and the funding schedule. This park cannot begin construction until the Purple Line construction is completed, and the parcel is transferred to the M-NCPPC. Based on the recent update, Purple Line expects to begin operation in fall 2026. The intent is to develop a facility plan with cost estimates by next summer. The recommended plan and budget will be submitted to the Montgomery County Planning Board and the County Council for approval to be included in the Fiscal Year 2025-2030 Capital Improvements Program for final design and construction.

Next Steps: Staff plans to meet with the community again in October to share concept alternatives and obtain feedback. The Open Town Hall survey will be open until August 31, 2022. The Town Hall questionnaires have several open-ended questions where people can share additional comments or ideas. Comments in the Q&A of this meeting will be downloaded and posted on the project web site for information.

Community Meeting Notes: Future Park in Lyttonsville

October 25, 2022 – Virtual Community Meeting, 7-8:30pm



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https://www.opentownhall.com/portals/260/Issue_12328#pd_top

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Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of this community meeting was to present preliminary concepts based on public feedback and gather input from the community for the park facility plan.

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with overview of the project background and feedback from the initial public meeting and Open Town Hall survey. Staff presented preliminary concepts A and B with 3D studies that were developed based on the preferred program priorities. Visual references of the design features, site amenities and landscape approaches were shared to convey the ideas. An overview of the process and schedule was also discussed. Approximately 30 people participated in the meeting. District 18 State Delegate Jared Solomon was on the call to participate in the meeting.

Staff encouraged participants to ask questions throughout the meeting in the Q&A box and contribute to the Open Town Hall survey after the meeting. A link to the survey was posted in the chat. Following the presentation, a discussion and Q&A period allowed for community feedback.

Comments and Discussion

Concept Plan

- A participant commented that “Heritage Terrace” is a great name for the terrace intended for community gathering and interpretation. Another person asked how the name was decided.

RESPONSE: The term “Heritage Terrace” was for identifying the program area on the plan. It was not a formal name. Staff welcomes the community’s input for this. Perhaps the space can be dedicated to a specific term once the plan is more developed.

- There was a question about accessibility in Concept B - would there be a ramp or a way for a wheelchair or stroller to get from amphitheater to the open area.

RESPONSE: Yes. There is an accessible ramp for people to access from the amphitheater to the open area. Both concepts are fully accessible among the program areas.

- A participant expressed interest in including a pollinator garden in the park.
- There was a question about the material for the multi-purpose lawn.

RESPONSE: Natural turf is intended for the multi-purpose lawn. The area will be designed and built in a way to sustain its use.

- There was a question about whether the park will have lighting.

RESPONSE: This park is intended to be used during daylight. It would be a passive park without athletic facilities that require night lighting. The Capital Crescent Trail (which will be operated by DOT) along the park edge will be lit. Sargent Sherard explained the hours of lighting are determined by the type of facility and the purpose. A commuter trail remains lit for safe access. Staff will reach out to DOT to get more information regarding the trail lighting.

- There was a question about whether the park sign will be installed on the Michigan Avenue frontage or would a second sign be installed on Kansas or elsewhere.

RESPONSE: Park signs will be installed at each entrance on both Michigan and Kansas Avenues.

- There was a comment about the concepts have done a good job using the grade to separate the various areas and would like to keep this approach.
- A participant expressed a preference for the idea of the small natural play area in Concept A. It would be nice to have an element in the park that attracts families with young children from both sides of the new Talbot Avenue Bridge. Something unique that is not in nearby play areas.

RESPONSE: The nature play area was intended for families with young children. The multi-purpose lawn is for families as well. The plan was careful not to pack the space with too many elements but allow flexibility for free play so the park can accommodate people of different age groups.

Interpretation

- A participant expressed a preference for the idea of historic interpretation signage in addition to the bridge element.
- There was a question about how content for the signage will be developed.

RESPONSE: The interpretation part of this project will be developed during the detailed design phase of the project and will be led by the Cultural Resources team of the Park Planning and Stewardship Division. A separate meeting will be held to obtain input for the content then. The current concept studies intend to focus on the physical layout and program integration.

- The idea of using an interpretive fence to screen the park from the houses was well-received. A participant suggested perhaps the residents to the south of the park could be polled to see if they want to screen or would rather look into the park. Their opinions should be given special weight.

Safety and Access

- A question was brought up about pedestrian access into the park from Kansas Avenue.

RESPONSE: Concepts A and B provide pedestrian access from both Kansas Avenue and Michigan Avenue.

- There was a concern about safety. With the trail on one side and the barrier for housing on the other, how does the design address the safety of those using this space.

RESPONSE: Safety and visibility are key criteria for park design. The concepts purposely locate amenities around the central open space to ensure direct physical and visual connections among the program areas. Everyone can see each other while engaging in their own activities. Transparent tree buffers along the trail and a tall canopy are envisioned to allow surveillance within and around the park. The concept plan will be evaluated by park police for CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) to make sure safety and crime prevention strategies are integrated into the design. Park Police Corporal Derrick Williams, the parks CPTED professional, will guide the development during the design process.

- Concern was brought up about children's safety and crime prevention given how close it is to the elementary school. Another participant commented that there will be no direct link between the park and Rosemary Hill Elementary School. Only the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) goes near the school. Safety for children should be paramount in park design and MCDOT's trail design. The new Talbot Avenue Bridge and ramp down to Lanier and Talbot

junction are crucial spaces for safety. More details are needed from Parks and MCDOT to evaluate safety.

Graphics and presentation

- A participant commented that photos of large and expansive green park spaces are not very relevant to this much smaller and narrower future Park in Lyttonsville with Capital Crescent Trail passing through it.
- There were comments about the human models in the presentation should reflect the historic and current demographic composition of the community. Come up with small and appropriate comparisons. Look into Trimble Sketchup People to find more diverse avatars.
- A participant expressed appreciation for the rendering of the two concepts and making use of separate areas or rooms for different types of activities.

Integration of bridge components

- A participant expressed interest in making the bridge elements look like a bridge with the two girders facing each other. Perhaps the bridge could be incorporated into the stormwater facility or bridged over the stormwater. Prefer the bridge elements installed in a way that visitors could travel over the bridge.
- A participant commented that neither of the two concepts presented incorporates a rebuilding of the historic Talbot Avenue Bridge in the park — the two girders placed parallel with wooden planks in between — something that many community members are in favor of. There was a question about whether any of the other study concepts included this idea. If so, can these concepts be shared with the community?
- A participant expressed disfavor for the bridge elements set low in the grass. It would disappear into the landscape. In concept B, could the bridge connect the lawn to the trail or be more bridge-like in nature?
- A participant commented that if the bridge elements faced each other, they might make a good conversational area. Several participants agreed that the bridge doesn't have to actually span a space or bear weight. A faux bridge that gives the sense of crossing over the old bridge would be the best way to incorporate the girders.
- A participant expressed a preference for a low-ground bridge element. This would allow youth to better and more safely interact with.
- A participant commented that the bridge components or replica of the components must be curated by a professional cultural historian before anything is done to transfer portions of it to the future park. Lyttonsville residents should be involved. The results of curated findings can be applied to the interpretive signage, fence, and other devices and in the future Lyttonsville Museum.

- There was a concern about cutting the bridge girder in half. Incorporation of the bridge components should protect the entirety of a historical piece that has great meaning to the local community.

RESPONSE: The bridge deteriorated. It will require major restoration to safely reinstall the bridge. The Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan recommends incorporating “components” of the bridge in the park. The preliminary concepts took a more conservative approach and proposed incorporating some components but not the bridge as a whole. The size of the girder (approximately 60’ long) and the significant grade change of the site also pose challenges for integration. More research will need to be done to determine whether the components could bear weight or should be installed as artifacts for display. Staff will look into the idea and bring a conservator with the expertise on board to assist with design development.

The other reason why the bridge components were suggested at the ground level in the concepts was for safety and liability reasons. Though unintended in the design, children might climb on the bridge structure. Per code, any vertical structure with a grade change more than 30 inches requires a guardrail. Guardrails or other elements near the bridge components would detract from the appearance and take away the historic character.

Both concepts could incorporate the idea of making the bridge elements look like a bridge. Concept A could easily incorporate the bridge girders on either side of the Heritage Terrace. The components will need to be carefully restored to be safe for touch. More testing and research will need to be conducted in depth to further the study.

General

- There was a question about how the timing of the construction/opening of the park will be influenced by the timing of when the Purple Line partners and MTA open the Capital Crescent Trail.

RESPONSE: This project intends to develop the plan to the adequate level with cost estimates to be included in the next 6-year CIP program for final design and construction. Based on the update by the Purple Line Community Advisory Team on June 14th, 2022, the Purple Line expects to begin passenger services in the fall of 2026. That would be when the property is made available to the Parks. Our intent is to be ready to start construction as soon as the property is transferred to Montgomery Parks. The design and construction of the park will be contingent upon funding approval by the Montgomery County Council.

- A request was brought up to provide more information on the ecology of the future park in a future presentation.

RESPONSE: Staff has been working closely internally to ensure the design is integrated with maintenance and operations for long-term sustainability while maximizing environmental benefits. Site ecology will be studied further after ownership is formally transferred and access to the site becomes available. The concepts explore different types of vegetation

and landscape management approaches to promote ecological services such as no-mow lawn or meadow vegetation to reduce mowing for passive program areas. The park could possibly be a pilot project to implement these practices. Operating budget for this park will also be coordinated during facility planning to ensure long-term sustainability.

- There was a request to provide more information on the bridge restoration in the next public meeting.
- A question was brought up about where people directly affected by this project could provide their feedback.

RESPONSE: Residents can provide comments on the Open Town Hall or contact the project manager directly by email or phone. Contact info is posted on the project web page and the chat.

- The Talbot Avenue Bridge Committee invited all community meeting panelists and attendees to the 5th Annual Talbot Avenue Bridge Lantern Walk on Saturday, November 12. Maybe one day, when the Lyttonsville Neighborhood Park is completed, the Lantern Walk will start and end in the park.

Next Steps: Staff will work on incorporating the comments from the public meeting and Open Town Hall survey to advance the design and will share the revised concept alternatives for feedback in the next community meeting. The Open Town Hall survey will be open until January 25, 2022. Comments in the Q&A of this meeting will be downloaded and posted on the project website for information.

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RESPONSE: This project intends to develop the plan to the adequate level with cost estimates to be included in the next 6-year CIP program for final design and construction. Based on the update by the Purple Line Community Advisory Team on June 14th, 2022, the Purple Line expects to begin passenger services in the fall of 2026. That would be when the property is made available to the Parks. Our intent is to be ready to start construction as soon as the property is transferred to Montgomery Parks. The design and construction of the park will be contingent upon funding approval by the Montgomery County Council.

- A request was brought up to provide more information on the ecology of the future park in a future presentation.

RESPONSE: Staff has been working closely internally to ensure the design is integrated with maintenance and operations for long-term sustainability while maximizing environmental benefits. Site ecology will be studied further after ownership is formally transferred and access to the site becomes available. The concepts explore different types of vegetation

and landscape management approaches to promote ecological services such as no-mow lawn or meadow vegetation to reduce mowing for passive program areas. The park could possibly be a pilot project to implement these practices. Operating budget for this park will also be coordinated during facility planning to ensure long-term sustainability.

- There was a request to provide more information on the bridge restoration in the next public meeting.
- A question was brought up about where people directly affected by this project could provide their feedback.

RESPONSE: Residents can provide comments on the Open Town Hall or contact the project manager directly by email or phone. Contact info is posted on the project web page and the chat.

- The Talbot Avenue Bridge Committee invited all community meeting panelists and attendees to the 5th Annual Talbot Avenue Bridge Lantern Walk on Saturday, November 12. Maybe one day, when the Lyttonsville Neighborhood Park is completed, the Lantern Walk will start and end in the park.

Next Steps: Staff will work on incorporating the comments from the public meeting and Open Town Hall survey to advance the design and will share the revised concept alternatives for feedback in the next community meeting. The Open Town Hall survey will be open until January 25, 2022. Comments in the Q&A of this meeting will be downloaded and posted on the project website for information.