

November 21, 2022

Ching-Fang Chen, Project Manager  
Patricia McManus, Design Section Supervisor  
for Lyttonsville Area - Future Neighborhood Park  
M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks, Park Development Division

Dear Ms. Chen and Ms. McManus,

We write first to thank you for all the hard work you and your staff have done on the design of the future neighborhood park in Lyttonsville. Your plans contain many great ideas, and we look forward to working with you further to refine them.

However, we are concerned by one element that appeared in both plans; namely, the design of the historic Talbot Avenue Bridge memorial. Both proposed plans show elements of the bridge placed in widely separated locations in the park. We do not favor this design concept. Instead of dispersing deconstructed elements of the bridge throughout the park, we believe that they should be kept together and arranged so that they are immediately recognizable as a bridge and remind visitors and residents of the role that the bridge played in the history of the community.

In fact, we believe that memorializing the bridge should play a – if not, the – central role in the park's design program. You have outlined many other worthy design objectives, but we believe that memorializing the bridge should be at the head of this list.

To accomplish these goals, we recommend that

- the two large girders be placed parallel to each other, separated by a relatively short distance.
- the girders be placed directly on ground-level foundations; there is no need for the girders to be self-supporting, but they do need to be fully visible.
- new design elements – such as ground cover, plantings, or even short pieces of train track – be used to give the illusion that the bridge is spanning something.
- the space between the girders be made to look like and function as a path. Ideally, this space would be covered by wooden planks, set in such a way as to mimic the wooden planks that served as the deck on the original bridge.
- the memorial be designed so as to recall the experience of community members using the bridge. The bridge was constructed at a time when racial segregation was both the law and the practice not just throughout the country, but, in particular, in Montgomery County. Residents of Lyttonsville had to cross the bridge to get to employment and shopping centers and again to return to the relative safety of the community. It would be a good idea, therefore, if the placement of the bridge could be used to invoke the experience of transitioning from a quiet protected place to a more cosmopolitan society and back again. One way to do this is to have the bridge connect the busy trail to the quiet interior of the park. You might be able to develop other designs to achieve this objective.
- the bridge memorial be coordinated with the Art in Transit projects at the Purple Line Station and the future History of Lyttonsville Exhibit at the Coffield Center. By focusing the park design

on the bridge and the experience of its users, the memorial will not repeat information and images provided by these other installations.

Of course, to make the memorial work some interpretive plaques or signs will be necessary and we hope to work with you on the content, placement, and size of these signs/plaques. In addition, it is important that the memorial fit both visually and functionally into the park's overall design, and we look forward to working with you on this aspect of the design too.

Given the importance of getting the memorial right – and right from the beginning – we thought it essential to communicate our ideas on its design now, before the park plan advances much further. In any design, it is our belief that it is essential that the memorial protect the integrity of the bridge, by echoing or recalling the function, meaning, and use of the original structure.

Given the central importance of the bridge memorial, it is essential that the bridge girders be preserved. Currently the girders are in the possession of MC-DOT, not the Parks Department. We think that it is important, therefore, that the park design team contact DOT to raise the issue of the proper preservation of the girders. What steps has DOT taken to preserve the girders? Does anything else need to be done? It might be necessary to have trained preservation experts look at the girders. We would appreciate your reporting back to us with your findings when we next meet.

Finally, we ask that, after you have considered our recommendations, you create and bring back to the community a set of new design alternatives so that we might continue this collaborative and productive design process. It is our hope that this meeting be held at some location in the community so that we can discuss your suggestions in person.

Sincerely,

Talbot Avenue Bridge Committee\*

Lyttonsville Community Civic Association  
*Patricia Tyson, Secretary and Acting President*

North Woodside Citizens Association  
*Genevieve McDowell Owen, President*

Rosemary Hills Neighbors Association  
*Linda Greenwald, President*

*\* The Talbot Avenue Bridge Committee, which grew out of the centennial celebration for the historic Talbot Avenue Bridge (1918-2019), consists of residents of the three neighborhoods (Lyttonsville, North Woodside, and Rosemary Hills) connected by the bridge. The committee's mission is to preserve saved parts of the Bridge, educate about the history of the Bridge and racial segregation in Silver Spring, organize social events that build community between neighbors connected by the Bridge, serve as a resource for others working on related projects, and ensure that important parts of Silver Spring's history are not erased. Contacts: Pat Tyson (Lyttonsville) and Anna White (North Woodside)*