



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB Item #6  
September 7, 2023

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** August 31, 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 *AF*

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

**SUBJECT:** Background for the Development of  
The Parks FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

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**APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES**

This is the Planning Board (PB) public forum for the development of the FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program following the CIP overview staff provided the Planning Board on July 6, 2023. This session will focus on receiving public input regarding interests and priorities for the park system. Following the public testimony, staff will be available to answer questions, and the PB may provide guidance and parameters for staff to refine funding scenario(s) for consideration at the work session scheduled for September 21, 2023.

During the July 6, 2023, briefing, staff described the framework for our approach and provided background on the process and initial ideas and priorities for consideration. Since that time, we have begun to assess and prioritize needs accordingly, received notification of two large grant awards that will require local matching funds, and worked on project timing that would influence funding needs.

This staff report expounds upon some of the initial thoughts shared on July 6, 2023. The general budgeting approach continues to build upon the progress we have made by targeting those projects and programs that serve the overarching themes in the Parks Department FY23-28 CIP, including “maintaining what we own.” The priorities we highlighted stem from planning efforts that address the recreation and open space needs of our residents and condition assessments of existing amenities and infrastructure.

## 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). 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 FY 25-30 CIP in May 2024. 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.

## ANALYSIS

The CIP is based upon a careful analysis of public recreation, open space, conservation, and management needs, with a realistic assessment of resources available to meet those needs. The CIP emphasizes maintaining what we have by programming a consistent stream of funding for **Level of Effort (LOE) projects** such as Park Refreshers and Programmed Lifecycle Asset Replacement (PLAR). By and large, LOE projects (except for a few increases as noted in this memo) are recommended to be maintained at a consistent level equal to what is authorized in the previously adopted CIP to allow ongoing work required to implement these programs. Examples include ADA Improvements, Trails Hard Surface Renovations, Restoration of Historic Structures, etc. Standalone **projects** are typically larger projects and should be advanced based upon master plans that identify community needs. The CIP is the primary implementation tool for Parks master plans, functional plans, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, and other studies, and it 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.

Further, Parks works to concentrate CIP funds in Equity Focus Areas that need additional investment and often rely heavily on public facilities for community building. Parks uses tools developed jointly with the Planning Department to identify individual Parks that could benefit from improvements and areas of potential land acquisition, and that advance the goals of promoting equity throughout the County.

To illustrate how the proposed priorities relate to the FY25-30 CIP, the following sections will identify the various funding sources the associated Project Description Forms (PDFs) that staff believes would benefit most from funding increases to achieve Department goals.

## FUNDING SOURCES

### Montgomery County Government:

- **General Obligation Bonds (GO Bonds):** GO Bonds are long-term bonds issued by the County to provide funding for major capital improvement needs. This generally includes major construction, alteration, or renovation of parks, facilities, amenities,

infrastructure, and other assets that serve the overall County. GO Bonds are typically used for projects in Non-Local Parks (i.e., Regional, Recreational, Special, and Stream Valley Parks), which would include our maintenance yards, Wheaton Regional Park, trails, and the new Lyttonsville Park along the new Capital Crescent Trail extension to Silver Spring. GO Bonds are allocated by the Council to serve the needs of multiple agencies and are governed by overall Spending Affordability Guidelines (SAG). While staff recognizes that the goals for the FY25-30 CIP will require significant increases in GO Bond allocation to Parks, these increased levels still represent a small fraction of the overall funding.

- **Current Revenue (CR):** CR is derived more directly from tax and fee revenues collected by the County that are used for planning studies, facility maintenance, and asset replacement that may not result in new assets that could be leveraged to back long-term debt. Furthermore, CR is used for facilities that are leased or rented and therefore are ineligible for GO Bond funding. This is a key reason why portions of our PLAR and Stream Protection PDFs, which support the increasing needs of aging infrastructure and protection of natural resources most under threat by climate change, are traditionally funded with CR. Like GO Bonds, CR is allocated by the Council to serve the needs of multiple agencies and governed by revenue forecasts. While staff recognizes that the goals for the FY25-30 CIP will require significant increases in CR allocation to Parks, these increased levels are important to maintain a functioning park system for our community.

#### M-NCPPC:

- **Park Bonds:** Park Bonds are long-term bonds issued by the M-NCPPC to provide funding for major capital improvement needs. This generally includes major construction, alteration, or renovation of parks, facilities, amenities, infrastructure, and other assets that serve individual communities. Park Bonds are typically used for projects in Local Parks. The level of Park Bonds programmed is not changing from what was previously authorized in the FY23-28 CIP.
- **Enterprise Revenue:** Like CR, Enterprise Revenue is derived from fee revenue collected by Parks and reinvested to maintain and modernize those facilities, so they can continue to be available for ticketing, rental, and/or lease for specific events and attractions. These funding levels are based on revenue forecasts, and we do not expect any significant changes in the FY25-30 CIP.

#### State of Maryland:

- **Program Open Space:** Program Open Space (POS) funding is derived from fees collected by the State as part of real estate transfers and allocated to each county based on State-adopted formulas. The program is administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and requires that the first 50% of POS be spent on land acquisition and allows the second 50% to be applied to development projects (meeting certain criteria and requiring a 25% local match). Based on guidance from DNR, we are projecting the same levels of POS funding as we did in the later years of the FY23-28 CIP. Note that the actual levels of POS funding are set annually through the State budgeting process, so we won't find out exactly how

much we will receive until the end of the General Assembly session. Furthermore, Montgomery Parks has been designated by the State to administer POS allocation within Montgomery County, which means a portion of our allocation may need to be passed through to municipalities when they make applications to DNR. Typically, once POS levels are set by the State, staff would request approval from the PB and Council and adjust appropriations each year as part of the budget process.

- State Aid: State Aid funding is typically created through legislation passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor as part of each Legislative Session. State Aid is often sponsored by State Legislators to support important projects that enhance the quality of life in the communities they represent. In recent years, Parks has actively sought out funding for projects through programs such as Legislative Bond Initiatives (LBI or Bond Bills) and Local Park Playground Infrastructure (LPPI) each year to augment the limited local resources available to fund projects. Furthermore, the Department has submitted grant applications through DNR for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for two projects that will be vital to implementing our Long Branch Park Initiatives effort, which we expect to receive decisions on during this budget cycle. Similar to POS allocations, if any State Aid is provided to Parks, staff would request approval from the PB and Council to adjust appropriations each year as part of the budget process.

#### Other Funding:

- Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Long-Term Financing for Water Quality Project: In recent years the County's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has requested that Parks apply for MDE Loans to fund our Water Quality PDFs, which are backed by Water Quality Protection Charge (WQPC) funds collected by the County as a line item on property tax bills. This important work involves the design and construction of water quality improvements and environmental enhancements throughout the park system that helps us meet overall water quality goals. While these loans require significant administrative resources to manage, Parks has agreed to use this program to implement important projects to protect and restore our Stream Valley Protection, which have been degraded by untreated impervious areas draining into parkland.
- Federal Aid: The Parks Department has been very proactive in recent years in seeking out and applying to various federal grant programs that can augment limited local resources. We have recently received notice of substantial awards through the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) and Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant programs, which will enable us to make Vision Zero safety improvements, rehabilitate aging trails, and create new connections in communities with significant needs. We also have applications pending for additional congressional grants. Note that project awards typically require significant local matching funds, which will need to be requested in appropriate PDFs for the FY25-30 CIP.

- Contributions: The Parks Department is sometimes the beneficiary of generous donations from organizations and individuals, which require appropriation through the CIP. These donations cannot be accurately forecasted, so we program a consistent level of assumed funding for appropriation purposes. We do not anticipate any changes in the FY25-30 CIP.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION FORMS (PDFs)**

The following section lists all projects that are new, or recommended for significant increases in the FY25-30 CIP request:

**ENERGY CONSERVATION-NL**: Increase GO Bond funding levels in each FY to fund fleet and equipment electrification and generate on-site solar power in support of the County's Climate Action Plan.

**LYTTONSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD GREEN**: Create a new GO Bond-funded Standalone PDF for the 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 community and provide a rest area for trail users, allowing visitors to interpret the Talbot Bridge Plaza that memorializes the historic segregation that plagued this community for many decades.

**PLAR-NL**: Increase CR funding levels in each FY to fund infrastructure projects required to meet the challenges of maintaining and modernizing our aging Park system. System-wide rehabilitation is critical to ensuring that Montgomery Parks continues to serve the community and our Condition Assessments reveal the need for ongoing increased funding to ensure safety, resilience, and reliability of our facilities. 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) to align with other agency practices.

**STREAM PROTECTION**: Increase CR and MDE Loan funding levels in each FY to restore Stream Valley Parks degraded by untreated impervious areas draining onto parkland. 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 has proven cost-effective and efficient. Parks has successfully implemented multiple projects that provide Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (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, with Parks staff leading 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.)

**TRAIL HARD SURFACE DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION**: Increase GO Bond funding levels in each FY to enable us to renovate existing trails and improve community connections with specific focus on Sligo Creek Trail and Northwest Branch Trail. This will also enable us to meet match requirements for the SS4A and RAISE grants we received from the Federal Government.

**TRAIL HARD SURFACE RENOVATION:** Increase GO Bond funding levels in each FY 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. This will also enable us to meet match requirements for the SS4A and RAISE grants we received from the Federal Government.

**VISION ZERO:** Increase GO Bond funding levels in each FY to provide safer trail intersections and traffic calming along parkways with specific focus on Matthew Henson Trail and Sligo Creek Trail corridors. This will also enable us to meet match requirements for the SS4A and RAISE grants we received from the Federal Government.

**WHEATON REGIONAL PARK:** Increase GO Bond and POS funding levels in each FY 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.

**PARKS ROADS:** Parks is working with Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to potentially transfer the Parks Roads PDF (P500720) from MCDOT's budget back into the Parks CIP and increase GO Bond funding levels in each FY to improve safety along our Parkways. This PDF was transferred to MCDOT 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 (from 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 ongoing collaboration with MCDOT and believes this transfer will benefit both agencies and allow Parks to better integrate this service with our overall work program.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through the course of the pandemic, the importance of Montgomery Parks to the community's wellbeing and quality of life became more evident and expectations for providing high-quality, safe, accessible, sustainable parks have never been higher. The Department goals outlined in PROS and the needs established through condition assessments require increased equity-based investments in the physical and natural resources that make up Montgomery Parks. The proposed priorities suggested above, along with community input and PB deliberations, will guide the formation of the FY25-30 CIP request that will be submitted to the County Executive and Council on November 1, 2023. Staff will develop specific funding scenario(s) based on guidance and input from the PB, which will be presented at the second work session scheduled for September 21<sup>st</sup>.

Attachments:  
Appendix A

# Appendix A

## M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks FY23-28 Capital Improvements Program Project Description Forms (PDFs)

PDF #	PDF Title	Description
128701	ADA Compliance: Local Parks	Level of Effort (LOE) that funds ADA improvements in Local Parks
128702	ADA Compliance: Non-Local Parks	LOE that funds ADA improvements in Non-Local Parks
008720	Ballfield Initiatives	LOE that funds athletic field improvements in all Parks
872002	Bethesda Park Impact Payment	LOE that funds parks in downtown Bethesda
977748	Cost Sharing: Local Parks	LOE that funds Local Park projects in conjunction with outside groups
761682	Cost Sharing: Non-Local Parks	LOE that funds Non-Local Park projects in conjunction with outside groups
998710	Energy Conservation - Local Parks	LOE that funds projects to modernize equipment, produce energy, and reduce utility costs in Local Parks
998711	Energy Conservation - Non-Local Parks	LOE that funds projects to modernize equipment, produce energy, and reduce utility costs in Non-Local Parks
957775	Facility Planning: Local Parks	LOE that funds planning efforts for development and renovation of Local Parks
958776	Facility Planning: Non-Local Parks	LOE that funds planning efforts for development and renovation of Non-Local Parks
018710	Legacy Open Space	LOE that funds acquisition of land throughout the County
872104	Legacy Urban Space	LOE that funds acquisition of land in the Energize Public Spaces (EPS) Study Area
872201	Mid-County Park Benefit Payments	areas
998799	Minor New Construction - Local Parks	LOE that funds new park facilities and amenities in Local Parks
998763	Minor New Construction - Non-Local Parks	LOE that funds new park facilities and amenities in Non-Local Parks
871745	Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park	Standalone that funds expansion of active recreation areas in Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park
872301	Park Acquisitions	LOE that funds acquisition of land throughout the County
871902	Park Refreshers	LOE that funds significant renovations in Local Parks
998701	PLAR: Local Parks	LOE that funds renovation of aging facilities in Local Parks
998707	PLAR: Non Local Parks	LOE that funds renovation of aging facilities in Non-Local Parks
78701	Pollution Prevention and Repairs to Ponds & Lakes	LOE that funds water quality improvements and environmental enhancements to existing facilities in all Parks
872202	Power Line Trail	Standalone that funds development of new trail within the Pepco ROW
808494	Restoration Of Historic Structures	LOE that fund renovation of historical buildings, structures, and sites in all Parks
058755	Small Grant/Donor-Assisted Improvements	Capital LOE that facilitates projects receiving non-County Government funding
871746	South Germantown Regional Park: Cricket Field	Standalone that funds development of a new cricket field in South Germantown Regional Park
818571	Stream Protection: SVP	LOE that funds water quality improvements and environmental enhancements in all Parks
768673	Trails: Hard Surface Design & Construction	LOE that funds new hard surface trails and connectors in all Parks
888754	Trails: Hard Surface Renovation	LOE that funds renovation of hard surface trails and connectors in all Parks
858710	Trails: Natural Surface Design, Constr. & Renov.	LOE that funds natural surface trails and connectors in all Parks
871540	Urban Park Elements	LOE that funds various park elements in all Parks within the EPS Study Area
871905	Vision Zero	LOE that funds safety improvements and traffic calming for trail and park roads in all Parks
871904	Wheaton Regional Park Improvements	LOE that funds renovations and new facilities Wheaton Regional Park

### Notes:

This list does not include PDFs that are pending closeout or have zero funding

The PDFs highlighted in yellow are proposed for increased funding in the FY25-30 CIP

One new PDF is proposed in the FY25-30 CIP for the development of the Lyttonsville Neighborhood Green project as well as shifting the MCDOT Park Roads PDF back to Parks  
Parks is working with MCDOT to transfer the Park Roads PDF back to Parks

For more information on the projects listed in the table above visit OMB website <https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/basiscapital/Common/ProjectList.aspx?ID=13&TYPE=CAT>

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# PB Staff Memo - September 7 2023 Work Session 8-31-2023 Final rp

Final Audit Report

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