

Northwest Branch Recreational Park Master Plan Public Meeting

7:00 P.M. Wednesday, November 19, 2008 - Stonegate Elementary School, 14811 Notley Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905.

Overview

This meeting was co-hosted by the Montgomery County Department of Parks, and the Mid-County and Eastern County Recreation Advisory Boards. It was attended by 41 people including Park and Recreation Staff and Park Police, Recreation Advisory Board Members, representatives from the Trolley Museum, Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts, adjacent neighbors and homeowners associations and others.

The purpose of Meeting was to gain public input on the future Master Plan for Northwest Branch Recreational Park. The Plan primarily focuses on the undeveloped areas north of Bonifant Road. The preliminary vision for the Park is the Development of the Park as a Family Recreation Activity Area with activities such as an adventure playground and picnic areas that would complement the trolley museum, antique car displays and historic features in Trolley Plaza.

It was noted that the planning for the Park is just beginning and a Purpose and Outreach Report would be presented to the Planning Board this spring with the Staff Draft of the Plan next winter. A public Input Survey was distributed and it will also be put on the Web.

Updates were given on the Trolley Museum and Verizon Tower construction. Storm Water Management approvals have delayed the Trolley Project by 2 months and costs have escalated. Some of the old track will be used and the museum will need to close from November 2008 – March 2009. The minimal lighting on the visitor's center will be buffered from neighbors. The Verizon Tower will apply for a special exception in the near future.

Focus Group Comments

The Meeting participants visited 3 Stations around the Room and Recorded Comments on 1) Natural Resources; 2) Trails and 3) Recreation and Trolley. A summary of comments, issues and concerns were as follows:

Natural Resources

- Provide Meadow Habitat between recreation areas. Keep vista's open
- Part of track is in stream buffer (new turnaround is of concern)
- Concern about trees covered in vines – want to save trees (Invasive removal is planned)
- Additional storm water runoff may be a concern (Reduce what is there)
- Will trails to Layhill Ballfields be cut off because of ICC?
- Trees to be cataloged within 2 years prior to construction
- Water quality monitoring should be done before and after development

Trails

- Rachel Carson – Plan will evaluate location crossing of Bonifant Rd.
- Connections to ICC Trail, Layhill Local Park and ICC are major trail issues
- Need paved trail loops and connections in the park
- Should have natural surface nature trails

- Studying connections to ICC Trail. It is essential to link ICC Trail from Layhill to ICC near Bonifant but it will very expensive – may be 20 years – this is too long – forces people into cars. Where ICC crosses Bonifant it will be 30 feet higher.
- Environmental constraints will make Bridging North West Branch difficult
- Rachel Carson is natural surface
- Rachel Carson should allow bikes
- A bicyclist should be able to get to Wheaton Regional Park from Matthew Henson
- Provide neighborhood connections extend blacktop path next to pond to the Park and Rachel Carson Trail
- Too many wetlands to easily get from Layhill Local Park to North West Branch Recreational Park. Boardwalk possible.
- Need multi-use natural surface trails to accommodate bikes and pedestrians, build a series of loops
- Consider Natural Surface Trail (include bikes) on old trolley track bed
- Provide bicycle off -road practice area – with obstacles dirt jumps
- Need a trail connection to Matthew Henson? Natural Surface? Shared use?
- Improvements needed along Layhill Road - Bike path side between Layhill Local Park and Llewellyn Park & roadway widening
- More policing/speed enforcement vicinity of Layhill Local Park

Recreation Facilities and Trolley

- Concerned about increased traffic on Layhill Road
- Concerned about impact to Neighbors – keep development away from homes. No matter what is proposed, mitigation of neighborhood impacts should be addressed.
- Want BMX Bike Area – Dirt surface track especially needed since “banned” from Skate Park
- Should not have festival area, but should be nature study.
- Need a left hand turn lane into Trolley Museum Going east on Bonifant Road
- Need appropriate signage (not like near P.O. on CT Ave) Safe Pedestrian Xing
- Objection to Dog Park – Noise and traffic barking sets off neighborhood dogs. Has been discussed.
- Dovetail Trolley education/info with Nature Education (at stops, for example) Don’t wipe out wildlife habitat. It is great to see wildlife from Trolley.
- Trolley Plaza – can function as a commons with space for performances, etc. (concerts, enactments) appropriate to the historic interpretive themes. Involve Historic Preservation/Cultural Resources to this project.
- How does this park compare in size to WRP? Will you do a comparison of intensity of development between this park and WRP?

Survey Results

A survey was circulated throughout the meeting requesting input on the types of facilities needed in this park. This survey is an ongoing online at:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/recipient/survey.zgi?p=WEB227K334TQMH>

Meeting Notes

7:00 P.M. Wednesday, November 19, 2008 - Stonegate Elementary School, 14811 Notley Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

The meeting was well attended and primarily consisted of nearby residents.

Updates

- **Trolley Museum Relocation** – Construction is going well may be completed by end of January.
- **Planning Work** – Has included: Environmental analysis, review of survey responses, and meeting with community residents. Survey responses indicated that many people wanted nature areas, family activities, and trails. Festival and skateboard areas were not wanted.
- **Development of Preliminary Park Concepts**

Proposed plans were guided by:

- Need to stay out of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Community desire for buffering existing homes.
- Need to provide family picnic/playground areas to complement trolley museum activities.
- Keeping noisier activities nearer the ICC and away from the neighborhood.
- Results of public survey.

Meeting broke into the following 3 groups to look at preliminary concept ideas.

- Proposed Recreation and Trolley Areas
- Proposed Trails and Bicycle Activities
- Proposed Environmental Interpretation

Meeting Notes

Comments were made by public in each group and included the following:

Recreation and Trolley Areas

Group Comments

1. Community access concerns/protection of private property - Along boundary of house lots / Where trail is near homes
2. Community Gardens - Deer might be a concern – not in survey – environmental damage problem – prefer more buffer. Did not want.
3. Prefer wooded buffer to an open play area – Keep natural area.
4. Buffer needs evergreens and should be wider extended north all the way to wooded area.
5. Question regarding landfill interpretation
6. Buffer playground from tracks – Possibly move playground farther from community.
7. Increase neighborhood buffer.
8. Playground will generate more traffic close to the neighborhood.
9. Move access road farther away from neighborhood.
10. Rear wall of trolley museum will be screened.
11. Move informal play area above playground.

Trail and Bicycle Activities

Group Comments

- Consider paving of small portion of Rachel Carson trail to allow community access on hard surface trail.
- Bonifant Rd NOT suited for walking or biking.
- Possibly have educational/interpretive signage along trails and throughout park.

- Desire to remove hard surface loop within park interior- Promotes erosion.
- Allow bicycle access to Matthew Henson Trail.

Environmental Interpretation

Group Comments

- Use deer resistant plantings
- Methane use/exhibit demo for kids could be done at landfill.
- Keep parking off neighborhood streets by providing enough inside parking.
- Buffer should include evergreens and extend past landfill (Make thicker)
- OMIT (in orange) hard surface trail. (Counter comment to keep trail)
- Continue deer management. It is working but need to continue.
- Use permeable pavement, rain gardens and other “green” storm water management techniques.

Next steps

- Sergeant Lauryn McNeill asked everyone to enter Park Police number (301)949-3010 on their cell phones.
- Notes from the public meeting will be put on the web.
- Comments made will be considered during development of staff Draft Plan which may go to the Planning Board in late winter.
- Revised plans will be available on the web before Planning Board Meeting.
- Meetings will be held with Stonegate Committee and other interest groups.