



MONTGOMERY PARKS

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
2425 Reedie Drive | Wheaton, MD 20902
MontgomeryParks.org

Concept Plan Review Process for Projects on Parkland

Introduction

The Concept Plan Review Process evaluates whether projects proposed on Parkland align with Montgomery County Parks' mission to steward our natural and cultural resources and further our recreational amenities, while abiding by applicable local, state, and federal policies prior to applying for a Park Construction Permit or submitting for Mandatory Referral.

Throughout this process, Park staff will work with the applicant to understand the scope of the work, determine if the impacts to parkland are avoidable or can be minimized, and if not, what mitigation or compensation will be required for the impacts. The "Policy for Parks" ([2022 PROS Master Plan Update](#)) outlines the "Avoid, Minimize, Mitigate, Compensate" approach and, where applicable, defines how non-park use of park property is not permitted unless the Montgomery County Planning Board deems it to be in public interest.

What Projects Require Concept Review?

Any project proposed by external government agencies, public utilities, non-profits, private developers, etc. that directly impacts parkland must complete the Concept Plan Review Process prior to applying for a Park Construction Permit. For projects that require submittal for Mandatory Referral¹, the Concept Plan Review shall occur prior to that submittal.

When and How to Get Started

The applicant should begin the Concept Plan Review Process as soon as possible in the project design phase. The applicant will need to provide a preliminary concept plan and a description of the intent and scope of the project, as the information is available. If multiple concept plans exist for a project, all versions should be submitted for review. Submittals should include site plans, facility plans, NRI/SFD, Forest Conservation Plans, and SWM concept (if applicable to the project). These materials can be preliminary and in draft form.

What Happens During and After Concept Review?

For projects not required to go through the Mandatory Referral review, a concept approval letter will be issued to the applicant once design plans align with the [mission, vision, and values](#) of the Montgomery County Department of Parks. Steps must have been taken to reasonably address the "Policy for Parks" and plans must include sufficient detail that shows compliance with comments provided throughout the concept review process. Projects deemed unacceptable can be denied approval during the Concept Plan Review Process. The concept approval letter must be included in the Park Construction Permit application in order to initiate Technical Review. Any divergence from the information provided in the concept approval letter may constitute grounds to rescind or amend concept approval and may result in reevaluation of the project for additional or amended conditions and requirements.

¹ According to Maryland State law (MD Land Use Code ANN. 20-301 through 305), all federal, state, and local governments and public utilities are required to submit proposed projects in Montgomery County for a [Mandatory Referral](#) review and approval by the Montgomery County Planning Board. The Planning Board must also review the widening, extension, relocation, narrowing, abandonment or change of use of any road, park, or public way as well as the acquisition or sale of any land by any public board, body, or official.

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After completing the Concept Plan Review Process, the applicant may then apply for a Park Construction Permit and initiate Technical Review. The Park Development Division of the M-NCPPC Department of Parks issues permits approving work proposed on properties owned or managed by Parks and on properties to be dedicated to the M-NCPPC. Technical reviews of proposed work are provided to check plans for technical accuracy and minimization of impacts to the park properties and users before the issuance of a Park Construction Permit. A Park Construction Permit must be issued prior to the commencement of any work on property owned, managed, or being dedicated to the M-NCPPC.

For projects that must go through Mandatory Referral, the approval of the concept plan, along with the accompanying conditions, shall be included in the final Planning Board decision. Planning Board decisions to approve impacts to park property and the associated conditions are binding and will be requirements of the Park Construction Permit approval.

Concept Review Process Overview

1. To begin process, Applicant contacts the [Resource Analysis Natural Resources Manager](#)
 - Applicant should contact Parks at the earliest possible stage of project development
2. Parks and Applicant schedule initial preliminary meeting or conference call
 - Project area, scope, and major known constraints identified
 - Determine if project needs to go through concept review or can go straight to Park Construction Permit
 - Describe Concept Plan Review and Park Construction Permit process to applicant
3. Applicant provides initial project sketch and/or documents to Parks
4. Field visit with Parks and Applicant to identify project extents and constraints
 - Results in general Park comments to ensure a viable Concept Plan
5. Applicant submits initial Concept Plan with general comments addressed, or justification otherwise
6. Parks' Project Manager (PM) coordinates review process
 - Plan sets are disseminated to project review team as they are received
 - Identify areas to review in field for internal and/or external meetings
 - Significant resources and amenities identified to ensure measures are implemented to minimize impacts to Parkland
 - Reviewers provide comments on specific project aspects within their areas of expertise
 - Parks' PM compiles comments into document and associated narrative to transmit to Applicant
 - Progress and review meetings held with Applicant as necessary
 - Applicant provides Parks' PM comment-response document and updates to the Concept Plan
 - Review process continues until the Concept Plan can be accepted and supported by the Parks Review Team
7. Mitigation and/or compensation plan for impacts to Parkland is finalized
8. Parks advises Applicant when to begin Montgomery County Planning Board Mandatory Referral submittal process (when required)
9. Parks provides Concept Plan Review approval letter or Mandatory Referral approval
10. Applicant submits for Park Construction Permit Review