

# Bethesda Market Park Public Meeting Notes



**Meeting #2: Thursday, March 16, 2023, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.**

**Bethesda Elementary School**

7600 Arlington Road, Bethesda, Md., 20814

Project Web site:

<https://montgomeryparks.org/projects/directory/bethesda-market-park/>

Presentation Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICMapVI9kr4>

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## **Purpose of Meeting**

The purpose for this public meeting was to introduce the Bethesda Market Park project located in downtown Bethesda and to solicit ideas and comments regarding the design and possible amenities within the park.

## **Meeting Summary**

Approximately 30 community members attended the meeting along with nine Montgomery Park staff, four staff from the developer's team and two consulting landscape architects from MPFP. The content of the meeting presentation was essentially the same as the meeting held the previous night at the Lawton Center in the Town of Chevy Chase.

The meeting started with brief introduction provided by Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director of Parks. Linda Komes, Project Manager and Landscape Architect in the Design Section of Montgomery Parks introduced the public/private partnership project, provided background information on recommendations for the new park in the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and the 2022 Park Recreation and Open Space Plan. The 2017 Planning Board approved Sketch Plan, which included the park and the private portion of the development, along with a general vision for the park and a Preliminary Program of Development, was presented.

Rick Parisi of MPFP, the consulting landscape architect began the main portion of the presentation which included a site analysis, their guiding biophilic design principle, a conceptual spatial relationship plan, pedestrian circulation study and plan, grading studies and many inspirational images of amenities and programming elements from other similar public spaces. The images were intended to spark ideas and conversation. The last slide in the presentation included the next steps with a link to the project web page and an online survey which will remain open until **April 30, 2023**.

Following the presentation there was a period for questions and answers before the meeting attendees split into break out groups for further discussion. Post-it notes were provided for attendees to write down comments which were posted on a white board and are included at the end of these notes.



## Q&A and Comments

The following is a summary of comments/questions from the Q&A, roughly in the order provided:

- What is the timeline for the park?  
*-It will take approximately two years to complete plans and receive permits. Construction is expected to begin in 2025. The Park area behind the Farm Women's Market (Lot 24), located between Willow Lane and Leland St. is anticipated to be complete in late 2027 early 2028, while the park area to be built on the adjacent lot (Lot 10) between Leland St. and Walsh St. is anticipated to be complete middle to late 2028.*
- Don't minimize the dog park. Make it long so there's room for the dogs to run.
- Install large trees.  
*- MPFP replied that there will be 3.5-4ft of soil depth above the roof of the underground parking structure which is adequate to support large shade trees. Typically, they specify a minimum size of 4-4 1/2" caliper which, depending on the tree species, is 16-18ft tall at the time of planting.*
- Will the Farm Women's Market be open during construction?  
*-No. The building has a failing foundation and is under review by the Historic Preservation Commission. The entire building will be lifted, shifted slightly and placed on a new permanent foundation. The building will also have a new addition built on the east side. It will be closed for approximately 2.5 years.*
- The new bike lanes in the area are confusing to drivers.
- The bike lanes are not connected and won't be connected for years to come. This is an annoyance to neighbors and dangerous with cyclists going in the wrong travel direction and crossing in unmarked locations. Something needs to be done right away.  
*-The Department of Transportation is not in attendance tonight but has a separate project to realign the Capital Crescent Trail and make the connection to the trail along the Purple Line. The bike paths are shown accurately on our plans, but the physical connections cannot be completed without completion of the Purple Line and the bridge over it connecting to new trail through Elm St. Park and to the mainstem trail along the Purple Line. Please contact DOT directly for more information.*
- It would be nice to have water in the park – either a splash pad or a fountain.
- Please provide a childcare center in the new building. The community needs a childcare center.
- The new park will be important for all of Bethesda. There should be free bus service to this site for residents who do not live within walking distance.
- Incorporate the Madonna of the Trail statue into the design of the Farm Women's Market or possibly in the shade garden area behind the great lawn. Also add a statue of a strong Piscataway woman next to the Madonna.
- Where do people enter the park?  
*-MPFP pointed out the pedestrian entrances on the concept plans. The entrances are located at the park corners and all along the western edge of the northern park and in the northwest and southeast corners of the south park. These plans are in the early stages of development and so are subject to change.*
- The Capital Crescent Trail seems close to the playground in the northern portion of Elm Street Park. Will this be unsafe?  
*-The playground will be separated from the Capital Crescent Trail by a retaining wall and a fence.*

- Will the same number of public parking spaces be replaced in the new garage?  
*-No. There are currently 300 existing public parking spaces in Lots 24 and 10. A total of 200 public parking spaces will be provided in the new garage as recommended by the Department of Transportation (DOT). DOT conducted a parking demand study and concluded that there were two underutilized parking garages nearby that could provide additional capacity. The cost to build underground parking spaces is very high, so there was a need to limit the number of underground spaces to only what is necessary.*
- How will you ensure that the park stays nice and is not vandalized?  
*-This Park is being thoughtfully designed as an active and vibrant space with lots of people using it and with many new residential units overlooking the park that will add eyes on the park. The more active it is the less opportunity for vandalism.*
- Several people requested the addition of a water feature/splash pad.
- Will Willow Lane be closed to traffic?  
*-No, both Willow Lane and Leland St. will remain open to traffic. We do hope to add raised crosswalks with special paving as traffic calming devices in the rights-of-way abutting the parks.*
- Will the sidewalks be widened? They are treacherous in places now.  
*-All the sidewalks surrounding the park and the private portion of the development will be rebuilt and improved to meet current county standards.*
- Will stormwater management occur on-site?  
*-Yes, the project will meet all requirements.*
- The large trees and native plants will be great. Make sure there's good understory.
- Do not put synthetic turf anywhere in the design, not even in the dog park.
- Concerns were expressed about the vendors of the Farm Women's Market and where they would carry on business during the time the market is closed for construction. Can they be given space to operate during construction?  
*-There will be coordination with the vendors and members of the co-op before the market is closed.*

## Break-out Session Comments

- Multiple comments were provided in favor of a splash pad.
- The Park doesn't need a water feature, it will be an unnecessary expense.
- Support for the dog park at whatever size makes sense given the other features and amenities of the park. It will be well-used no matter the size.
- The large dog area should be larger.
- A place for teens such as small-scale skate park and graffiti wall
- Provide a shade structure at the stage for events and covered eating area.
- Doesn't like all the high-rise development in Bethesda next to low houses.
- Wants the team to be aware that there are beautiful views of the sunset on the Wisconsin Avenue sidewalk in front of the Farm Women's Market (near Willow Lane) looking west down Bethesda Avenue. Not sure if it would affect thinking for the design of the Farm Women's Market site at this corner, but it's a favorite place and view.
- Wants the team to be aware that the level of bike use on Leland Street as it interfaces the park may be heavier than expected on weekends. Some bike groups tend to meet here, rather than Willow Street, because the road is wider and easier to negotiate.
- Concern of traffic congestion from the garage exist at Leland Street and Wisconsin Ave intersection.
- Request to see DOT traffic report.
- Request to bring all kind of local vendors to FWM, like flowers not just produce.
- There needs to be a way to let people on the west side of Wisconsin Avenue know that there is a

special park just behind the Farm Women's Market

- Paint a large, colorful crosswalk in Wisconsin Avenue in front of the Farm Women's Market as shown on the Sketch Plan.
- Meet or exceed the County's on-site stormwater management requirements.

## Post-It Note Comments

(Transcribed as written and loosely grouped by topic)

- The Park will need restrooms
- Are there plans for bathrooms
- What about?? 1) Bathrooms 2) Water Fountains 3) Water Sprinklers 4) Water, Chimes 5) A childcare center in the new residential building 6) Free parking to go to the parks!!!
- Would love to also update Elm St. Park. It is old and outdated. Would be nice to fit with the new design.
- It would make sense to also update Elm St. Park, so the three parks are coherent in design. Elm St. Park could use updating. Right now, it's sad.
- Add splash park and ice rink
- Water features would make a huge difference! They always are a huge focal point that adds so much value!!
- Water feature would be great
- Dog run for large dogs should be larger
- Nice Project! Include: Heritage trees, native plants, water feature, large dog park for large dogs and small. No synthetic turf. Green roof or green walls. Net zero bldg.
- A really important aspect of making a park like this feel safe is lighting. Overhead lights, footpath lights, etc. are all a big part of making a park like this welcoming. Keep the lights on post sunset so it continues to feel safe and discourage bad behavior.
- Please do not include the mix car-pedestrian lane. Just close it to all cars.
- Please consider the impact on traffic leading to the park and the sequence leading to construction. In particular the bike lane on Woodmont Avenue in front of the Marriott Hotel.
- Please provide contact information for DOT bike lane team
- Don't skimp on parking-even people on the metro have cars
- Graffiti wall for young people
- Skate park, free art/graffiti zone to attract teenagers
- This Park will be great, but it would be greater if we incorporated Bethesda's historic landmark into the park-The Madonna of the Trail monument-which is in need of a safe location. Let's do it!
- Think about how noise from the game area will affect the need for quiet in the "Reading Rooms"
- The game room is a great idea and will be very well received especially if the tables hold up to the weather! Kids and adults of all ages will enjoy it!
- It's important to have 100% swm-not sure if it's actually required in the Sector Plan.
- Please consider the maintenance needs of equipment. Lack of maintenance should be expected.
- Community Garden?
- I saw this in another park-using locked storage units stocked with woodworking and/or sewing supplies that can be opened by staff at special times and weekends.
- What is the plan for relocating the Women's Farm Market during the construction? It should be a priority to preserve it and the vendors.
- What about free bus service!! "A stop at the park" using the Circulator!! Establish new routes from different locations around Bethesda.