

## **Long Branch-Wayne LP Renovation Project**

Community Meeting #1 – March 8, 2016

Park Staff Present at Community Meeting #1

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Josh Arnett, Park Development

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Alex Girr-Borrayo, Public Affairs & Community Partnerships

Jeff Coe, Park Police

David Ache, representing Councilmember Hucker's office was present during the first portion of the meeting.

### **Meeting Summary**

The meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation to provide an overview of the project, including master plan guidance, existing site conditions, and opportunities for future development. An overview of the process and schedule was also discussed. There was a brief break to allow community members to think about the questionnaire that was distributed, and then each question was discussed. A summary of the meeting discussion, as well as submitted responses to the questionnaire is outlined below. Community comments that were provided before and after the meeting have also been incorporated.

### **What is the best thing about Long Branch-Wayne Local Park Today?**

- Large, open green spaces.
- The park is well used, has multiple activities available for park users, and there is something for everyone.
- Large trees, shade.
- Sledding Hill (it was actually graded in the past to increase the height at the top).
- There's enough to do in the park that it keeps kids in the neighborhood busy and give them a place to go.
- Picnic pavilion, which is one of few that can accommodate large groups.
- The scale of the park is small and nice with separation from University Boulevard.
- The park is not overbuilt or overdeveloped, which is part of its charm.
- The trees provide a sound buffer from University Boulevard and the Beltway.
- The proximity to nature/sanctuary.
- Soccer field
- Outdoor areas for exercise.
- It serves as a community gathering space.
- The park location is convenient, it's not overly modern and it feels like a park.

### **What is the worst thing about Long Branch-Wayne Local Park Today?**

- Excessive trash and the placement of trash cans. There are not enough trash cans in the park. The need for trash cans near the playground was specifically noted. The garbage is not removed frequently enough, especially after weekend use, and there is always trash in the park. Park maintenance workers have been observed mowing over loose trash without picking it up. Recycling containers would also be nice.
- Criminal/illicit activity – the park has secluded areas that provide cover. Inappropriate behavior has been observed in the parking lot all hours of the day, as this area is secluded and sunken. There is after hours use of the park occurring. Park Police requested that residents continue to call them whenever there is an issue.
- There are homeless people in the stream valley (encampments) and in the picnic pavilion.
- The soccer field is overused – it generates noise and trash. Field users need to be held accountable to pick up their trash.
- There is currently not enough parking or maintenance support for trash removal to support a large field.
- The excessive use of the soccer field spills into the neighborhood and takes away from the quality of the park for nearby neighbors, especially on weekends. The park is overcrowded, parking overflows into the neighborhood, and there are cars with Virginia and DC license plates (not from Montgomery County).
- The quality of the soccer field is poor and it was not built properly. It may have poor fill and clay material underneath it. The current condition drains poorly. The turf is worn due to overuse, including illicit use when the field is closed during the winter or due to wet weather. Neighbors call Park Police, who arrive promptly and remove the users. Unfortunately, users often return within an hour or two and continue to play on the closed field.
- Music from ice cream trucks on weekends is annoying to neighbors.
- People use the port-a-potty fence enclosure as a restroom even after the port-a-potty has been removed. It was recommended that a door that can be locked be added to the enclosure so that it can't be used off-season.
- The sediment pond is a mess, muddy and is unsightly. Basketballs from the court fall into it. When the pond is cleaned, sediment is dumped on the hillside.
- Kids skateboard on the railings down the steep steps from the picnic shelter. This seems dangerous. Consider other ways to accommodate this use.
- The playground is too small and has broken equipment. There is nothing for kids to play with.
- There are limited facilities and amenities.
- The grounds of the park are not kept in good condition.
- There were downed trees blocking the sidewalk along University Boulevard that took a few months to clean up and take away.

### **What elements of the park today should change as the park is renovated?**

- Reduce the size of the field, so that it only serves youth games. Consider rotating the location of goals.
  - Park staff pointed out the significant shortage of adult size rectangular fields in this area of the county and the need for additional large fields (which is why the existing field is well used).
  - Staff also pointed out that this park is designated as a Local Park, which typically provides regulation size, permitted athletic fields and have large service areas.
- Manage the use and permitting of the field better. Remove the soccer goals, especially when the field is closed during winter months, to prevent unwanted use. Consider providing portable goals to groups with the permit rental. Fencing the field will not work, as users will just hop the fence, and a fence would be unsightly and would restrict uses other than active recreation.
- Relocate or remove the sediment pond if possible. At a minimum, provide fencing to prevent balls from falling into it.
- Improve visibility into the park for security with the understanding that retaining the trees is also important.
- Relocate the playground to a less remote area with better proximity to other park activities, so that it feels safer. The playground should be expanded. Move it closer to the picnic shelter area.
- Physically close the parking lot at night (with a gate or chain) to prevent after hours use.
- Add a lockable door to the port-a-potty enclosure.
- Don't encourage additional traffic or pedestrians on East Wayne Avenue by improving sidewalks or entrances, as this will increase activity and exacerbate conflicts with the neighborhood.
- There should be more parking within the park to serve field users, or it should be moved out of the neighborhood onto University Boulevard. There could be a separate entrance from University Boulevard to a relocated parking area, but not from Glenville Road (which is a private road) along the park's southern boundary.
- Parking along East Wayne Avenue should be discouraged and signs installed to restrict parking. Many of the neighborhood homes don't have driveways and need the on-street parking. Site lines are compromised when the street is full of cars parked on-street.
- Consider intersection improvements for vehicles and pedestrians at University Boulevard and East Wayne Avenue. The left turn from northbound University onto westbound East Wayne Ave is challenging, since there is no dedicated turn (green arrow) and vehicles need to cross three lanes of oncoming traffic. As a result, park users proceed north and perform u-turns to access the park from the north.
- Provide accessible (ADA compliant) improvements that will improve pedestrian connectivity through the park and beyond the park boundaries. Examples include improvements to sidewalks on University Boulevard, and an improved accessible bridge across Long Branch stream to provide connectivity to the elementary school and other local destinations.

Review proposed improvements to the neighborhood that will be provided with the Purple Line development and support any improvements which might enhance pedestrian connectivity over time.

- Re-pave connection from East Wayne Avenue to the Long Branch pedestrian bridge, as it's hazardous to pedestrians walking through there. Could add a new sidewalk on East Wayne Avenue to improve conditions for pedestrians.
- Move trash cans to more effective locations.
- Maintain the trees and grounds better.
- Increase policing and monitoring of the use of the park, with special emphasis on weekends. In general, the entire park should be made safer.
- Provide a better sound barrier along the neighborhood, especially along the E. Wayne Ave frontage.
- Address kudzu and invasive and overgrown plants.
- Remove soccer field.
- Improve soccer field condition and field boundaries.
- Coordinate event programming in park on weekends so that it doesn't occur at the same time as soccer games.
- Add a pedestrian connection from the University/Glenville Road corner of the park.
- Improve the dangerous sidewalk condition along University Boulevard. The sidewalk could be pulled further into the park with connections provided to the picnic shelter and other pathways.
- Make better use of the park along University Boulevard. Clean and sweep the loose pebbles along the University Boulevard sidewalk at the bench area.
- Provide a new trail connection from University to the picnic shelter.
- The Active Montgomery Website states that there are "eight (8) picnic tables" for parties/picnics associated with the permit picnic pavilion, but there are only seven (7) picnic tables for use.
- Add more charcoal grills at the picnic shelter. The number of charcoal grills should reflect the capacity allowance of forty (40) people that is listed on the Active Montgomery website.
- The swales surrounding the soccer field remain very wet long after a rain storm, resulting in wet shoes when attempting to cross.

#### **What elements of the park should remain as the park is renovated?**

- The basketball court should remain and be improved with surfacing, a three-point line, and higher quality backboards. Provide measures to contain stray balls.
- Playground should be renovated, relocated, expanded and include activities for small children.
- Soccer field
- Picnic shelter should remain but be updated.
- Sledding hill
- Trees and vegetation
- Wildlife

- Open space
- Small parking lot
- Doggie bag holder
- General park improvements

**If you could add one element to the park, what would you add?**

- Dog park
- Loop paths and/or an exercise track through the entire park. A quarter mile running track could be added around the soccer field.
- Bike racks
- A tennis court (if there's space)
- Shade near the playground
- Lighting
- Better balance of park activities (not such heavy orientation towards soccer).
- A small performance area for music or other activities.
- Additional on-site parking.
- Improved safety for pedestrians.
- Better management of the field, so it's not a detriment to other park users.
- Buffers for the neighborhood.
- Public artwork (to reflect unique aspects of the community) with community participation.
- Programmed activities or events within the park.
- Improve access and engagement/interaction with Long Branch stream. Provide educational opportunities within the stream valley setting to teach children about the natural environment. This could occur along the stream with a connection to the school.
- Permanent toilets
- Better maintenance of the park.
- Heart-Smart Path
- Trees along Wayne Avenue
- Spray feature
- Skateboard area
- Drinking fountain
- Signage to encourage overflow parking at Oak View Elementary School on weekends and improvement of the pedestrian stream crossing and access to the park.

**If you could take away one element from the park, what would you take away?**

- Reduce the soccer use
- Unsafe drainage structures and standing water in stormwater management pond.
- Remove kudzu and non-native invasive plants from the stream area. Some expressed interest in volunteering to help with stream clean up or non-native invasive removal.
- Softball backstop
- Trash
- Poor drainage
- Reduce shrubbery to improve visibility.
- Soccer field
- Soccer goal posts
- Basketball court
- Hidden spots where trash collects or is thrown.

**Name a park that you have visited that reflects your vision for Long Branch-Wayne Local Park?**

- Upper Long Branch Park is a good example of a playground.
- The bridge and trail connection over the stream to the Long Branch Library is a good example.
- North Four Corners Park
- Jesup Blair Park
- Bullis Park
- Broadacres Park
- Like the park as is, would just make it cleaner and nicer.
- Olney Manor Park
- MLK Park (playground and shelter area)
- White Oak
- Some elements of Greenwich Park
- Takoma-Piney Branch Park
- Chevy Chase Playground (in DC at 41<sup>st</sup> and Western Avenue) – great mix of playground, field, spray park, dog park and bathroom in a compact area.
- Long Branch Stream Valley Park – unnamed park at Houston Avenue and Hadden Drive on Long Branch Trail. It has a great playground for all ages. Kids play on the banks of Long Branch stream at an access point.
- Cabin John Regional Park