

Community Meeting Notes: Future Park in Lyttonsville

June 29, 2022 – Virtual Community Meeting, 7-8:30pm



Project Web site: [Lyttonsville Park](#)

Open Town Hall Links: [Lyttonsville Survey](#)

Meeting Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGOMj4EgjsE>

Project Manager: Ching-Fang Chen, Ching-Fang.Chen@montgomeryparks.org

Parks Staff in Attendance:

- Ching-Fang Chen, Project Manager, Park Development Division (PDD)
- Patricia McManus, Design Section Manager, PDD
- Brian Lewandowski, Project Engineer, PDD
- Charles Kines, Planner Coordinator, Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PPSD)
- Shirl Spicer, History Coordinator/Museum Manager II, PPSD
- Carl Heeralal, Park Manager, Southern Parks
- Melissa Chotiner, Community Outreach and Engagement Manager, Public Affairs and Community Partnerships (PACP)
- Michelle Ramirez, Public Outreach Specialist, PACP
- Susan Stafford, Communications Director, PACP
- Trevin Sherard, Park Police Officer

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of this community meeting was to provide background information for the upcoming new neighborhood park project in Lyttonsville and gather input and ideas from the community for the park facility plan.

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with a presentation that introduced the project location, existing conditions, adjacent Purple Line and Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) projects, soil analysis and site cleanup actions, and historical and cultural background of Lyttonsville and the Talbot Avenue Bridge. Staff shared the Sector Plan's recommendations for park and public space network and preliminary program for the new park. Images of relevant examples that might be applicable to the project were shown for inspiration. An overview of the process and schedule was also discussed. Approximately 50 people participated in the meeting. Delegate Jared Solomon made brief remarks and expressed support for the project.

Staff encouraged participants to ask questions throughout the meeting in the Q&A box and contribute in the Open Town Hall survey after the meeting. A link to the survey was posted in

the chat. Following the presentation, a discussion and Q&A period allowed for community feedback.

Discussion/Q&A

Park Name: There was a comment about the community's options for suggesting a specific park name. The park name is one of the questions for which we are seeking input in the Open Town Hall survey. A few recommended names came up from the community are included in the survey. Staff encouraged the community to indicate their preference or make suggestions.

Dog Park: There was interest for having a dog park within the park. Based on the criteria identified in the Department's 2019 Dog Park Site Suitability Study, this parcel is not considered to be a suitable site for a dog park due to direct adjacency of homes. In addition, this parcel is too small to accommodate a dog park and other types of park facilities, and there is no available parking.

There is a demand for dog parks in Montgomery County, and they tend to draw people from greater distances. Until countywide needs are better met, parking spaces would be desirable to support a dog park. This site and the surrounding neighborhood streets are too small and restrictive to accommodate adequate parking, which could cause congestion on the neighboring residential streets. There are new parks proposed within the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan area that are intended for active recreational use and would provide a more suitable location for a dog park in the future.

A question was brought up about the possibility of using a portion of Rosemary Hills-Lyttonsville Local Park (RHL) for a dog park. Staff examined the prospect of adding dog amenities there, but the available space in the park is too close to single family dwellings.

Lighting: There was a question about whether solar lighting would be an option for the park. Park facilities typically close at dark, and lighting was not intended for the park. The CCT will be operated and maintained by Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), and there is a possibility it may be lit at night. Staff will examine this issue further.

Trail alignment: A question was brought up about the possibility to meander or relocate the CCT alignment other than what's shown on the Purple Line plans. The current trail alignment hugs the park boundary and is right along the edge of the Purple Line. The current alignment is the most efficient way of aligning the trail to preserve the most area for the park. Montgomery County Department of Transportation is responsible for the design of the trail, and the construction documents have been fully developed. It would be difficult to make changes to the alignment at this point in time.

Skate Features: There was a question about the potential of using skate features within the park. The proposed park should be designed to avoid conflict with other trail users. It would be possible to incorporate small skating elements that wouldn't take up too much space like a dedicated skate spot at Woodside Urban Park or a gathering destination for the skaters. This can be studied further.

Restroom: There was a request for a restroom in this park or to identify where might restrooms or portable potties might be located along CCT. Permanent restrooms are not usually included in parks except for recreational and regional parks where high level of uses are expected. Due to costs and maintenance implications, a restroom would not be part of the scope for this project. Staff will confirm whether restrooms will be incorporated in other areas along the CCT.

Water Feature: Comments were expressed about the possibility of having an accessible fountain, water feature, or water play feature in the park. M-NCPPC would consider the idea if the budget permits. Since a water line will need to be brought to the park to provide a drinking fountain, the project could explore ways to create a water feature that would be manageable and sustainable. Fountains for water play require restrooms by code, so that may limit the possibilities for the site.

Amphitheater: An amphitheater was suggested.

Amenities and experiences: A community member asked about what kind of amenities might be welcoming for young children and their parents. Staff envision the park to be welcoming, beautiful, and flexible with an emphasis to highlight the cultural and historic heritage of Lyttonsville. Anticipated amenities might include sitting areas with nice furnishings, ping pong tables or game tables, drinking fountains, trees for shade, fitness opportunities, interpretation, and historic bridge components integrated in the park for story-telling. The amenities would be multi-purpose and multi-generational to serve many people. Trail related amenities would be programmed along the edges with contemplative spaces located in the interior and towards the residential dwellings. The site has approximately 15 feet of grade change and will require terracing to accommodate the various program components. Retaining walls could be used for seating. Walls and ramps would offer opportunities for different spatial experiences. The park could be a place to stay, read, watch people, or have a conversation with neighbors and could be a pleasant stop for the trail users to take a break and enjoy the amenities.

Staff encouraged the participants to share ideas, recommend amenities, or comparable examples.

Property: Concerns were brought up about if any dwellings will be sacrificed due to the project. The project does not intend to remove any houses or nearby residences and will be working entirely within the parcel which is the current staging area for the Purple Line.

Comments were brought up about a portion of the adjacent property that was taken by the Purple Line for construction. Staff will check with the Parks Real Estate Section to follow up on the issue.

Buffer: A community member asked what will back up to the homes adjacent to the park. The project would propose to create a green buffer for the park and the immediate residences while restoring habitat for the environment and shade for people to enjoy. Establishing a vegetative buffer that is aesthetically pleasing and ecologically sound is one of the priorities for the new park. The project will collaborate with the M-NCPPC Pope Farm Nursery to import good soils, plant specimen trees and control invasive species.

Stormwater Management (SWM): Comments were expressed that the community wants the park to be green without a lot of paving. The project will implement stormwater management practices and minimize impervious surfaces to establish a holistic and healthy park environment. The SWM facilities will become a landscape feature for the park.

Soil: Site grading, drainage, capping of contaminated soil and importing new soil will be carefully engineered and implemented to make sure the park environment will be safe for the community. Contaminated soil underneath will inevitably be costly and impact the project. There was a comment about not skimping on the amenities because of the needs to mitigate contaminated soil.

Safety and Operations: There was a question about maintenance and operations of the new park. The park will be maintained and mowed by staff of the Meadowbrook Maintenance Facility. There is anticipated to be twice weekly trash collection, once on the weekend and once during the week. The timing and frequency can be adjusted based on the needs of the park.

Sargent Sherard explained how and when to report issues to the park police and the importance of reporting any problems in the park. Parks open at sunrise and close at sunset. People should not stay in parks after dark except athletic courts or fields with lighting. The community was instructed to contact the park police at 301.949.8010 to report any type of vandalism, misconduct, damage, or activities out of order. The reported crime gets classified and documented accordingly. Non-police issues will be referred to the appropriate division to handle the request. A member of the community suggested posting a sign with a phone number to call at the park. Park rules signage will be posted at both entrances to the park.

Concerns were expressed about the park being tucked away where no one would see it and that it could potentially become an isolated space. Park police will conduct a CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) assessment and provide recommendations to the design team to address lighting and safety issues during the design process. Park police encouraged neighbors to contact the park police if they observe suspicious activities after hours. The CCT is a regional trail and expects to get tremendous use. The park may become a popular stop for hikers and bikers and get a lot of use by people living in the community. Higher usage tends to keep eyes on the park and discourage inappropriate activities.

Interpretation: Staff shared ideas about possible approaches for interpreting the history and culture of Lyttonsville. Different from the traditional free-standing signs, interpretation could be combined with the furnishings or the physical elements of the park. Historic bridge components could be integrated in the space to tell the story. Multi-purpose interpretation panels could function as a fence or wall like the example shared in the presentation. The park could explore interactive interpretive approaches to bring this rich history to life, both engaging the community itself and commemorating what's taken place, perhaps involving the youth in developing the interpretive story. It will be useful to have a gathering space or amphitheater to provide programming opportunities for cultural events.

Schedule: the project schedule is dependent upon the Purple Line construction schedule and the funding schedule. This park cannot begin construction until the Purple Line construction is completed, and the parcel is transferred to the M-NCPPC. Based on the recent update, Purple Line expects to begin operation in fall 2026. The intent is to develop a facility plan with cost estimates by next summer. The recommended plan and budget will be submitted to the Montgomery County Planning Board and the County Council for approval to be included in the Fiscal Year 2025-2030 Capital Improvements Program for final design and construction.

Next Steps: Staff plans to meet with the community again in October to share concept alternatives and obtain feedback. The Open Town Hall survey will be open until August 31, 2022. The Town Hall questionnaires have several open-ended questions where people can share additional comments or ideas. Comments in the Q&A of this meeting will be downloaded and posted on the project web site for information.