

Community Meeting Notes:

Long Branch Local Park and Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Park
Renovation

February 2, 2023 – Virtual Community Meeting, 7-8:30 pm



Project Web sites (and Open Town Hall Links):

[Long Branch Local Park](#)

[Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Park](#)

Meeting Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUxtWezO4f0>

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Parks Staff Presenters:

- Christie Ciabotti, Site Planning and Trails Supervisor
- Darren Flusche, Park Planning and Stewardship Division Chief
- Hyojung Garland, Park Planning Supervisor
- Brian Lopez, Park Manager, Southern Parks
- Tricia McManus, Design Section Supervisor, Park Development Division
- Rachel Newhouse, Park Planner, Project Manager – Long Branch Parks Initiative
- Sgt. Trevin Sherard, Park Police
- Lt. Francis Wulff, Park Police

Purpose of Meeting:

The purpose of this community meeting was to introduce concepts for upcoming improvements to Long Branch Local Park and Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Park, update the community on the Long Branch Parks Initiative, and gather input and ideas from the community about the renovation ideas.

Meeting Summary:

The meeting began with a slide presentation that provided an update on [Montgomery Parks' Long Branch Park Initiative](#) (LBPI), and introduced project background, amenity recommendations, and concept design ideas for two parks that are part of the LBPI: Long Branch Local Park and Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Park. Simultaneous Spanish language interpretation was provided throughout the meeting. Staff described outreach efforts in Long Branch and explained how research and parks-wide data collection along with public input led to the current recommended amenities for Long Branch Local and Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Parks. Concept designs were introduced through plans and images shared with meeting attendees. Staff encouraged participants to ask questions throughout the meeting

through the Q&A function. Following the presentation, a discussion and question and answer period allowed for community feedback through the Q&A.

Discussion/Q&A

The following is a review of the primary discussion topics from the Q&A:

Amenities

Bathrooms/Drinking Fountains

Input: Several meeting attendees commented on the need for bathrooms in these parks. While there are bathrooms in adjacent buildings, it was pointed out that these buildings are not always open during park hours. In addition, concern was expressed for bathroom needs during times when many people are in the park for recreational games and other events.

Response: As design for these parks progresses, Parks staff will investigate the feasibility of portable toilets at these sites. Coordination with operations and maintenance staff will be required as part of the study and eventual design and installation if portable toilets are included.

Drinking fountains will be provided in both parks.

Skate Park

Input: There was interest in and support for the skate park in Long Branch Local Park including an offer to help connect with the skater community for specific feedback about area skateparks and features. One question asked if the skate park could be named for Tyre Nichols.

Response: Thank you! If the skate park at Long Branch Local Park moves forward as part of the plan, Parks will hire a skate park designer to design the features and layout of the skate park. Public outreach is normally part of this design process. The skate park will be open during park hours: dawn to dusk. In response to naming the park for Tyre Nichols, Parks staff posted the naming policy for Montgomery Parks: [Naming Policy](#)

Dog Park

Input: Several commenter's agreed that a dog park is a good idea in this area. One meeting attendee pointed out that there are currently numerous areas being used to exercise dogs which may inhibit other uses in the parks. There was a question about the possibility of lighting the dog park for extended hours.

Response: Most Montgomery Parks operate from dawn until dusk, and this is the current proposal for both Long Branch Local and Long Branch Arliss Parks. A reassessment of this regulation for the dog park at Arliss may be possible and would require additional coordination with Operations and Park Police.

Playground

Input: *Will these parks have improved playgrounds? One commenter offered to connect Parks with students at Rolling Terrace ES for input on playground plans.*

Response: Thank you! Connecting with students would be great. Both park renovations will include upgrading and re-imagining each park's playground location and features.

Soccer Field

Input: *One meeting attendee pointed out the poor condition of the grass field at Long Branch Local Park and asked if the field could be turf instead.*

Response: This field will be a grass field. It will be designed for its anticipated use which includes proper construction, drainage, and careful selection of grass species. The field will be maintained as an athletic field.

Shade

Input: *Several comments focused on shade in the parks and the need for shade, particularly during the hot summer months.*

Response: Both park plans will include shade/picnic shelters and will also likely include new tree planting that will help with long-term shade needs.

Pickleball

Input: *Some comments addressed a desire for and support of pickleball at Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Park. One responder suggested adding 6 pickleball courts to the park. Another responder offered to help plan pickleball in the park.*

Response: Thank you! The tennis court planned for Long Branch Arliss Park would include striping for at least two pickleball courts. In this case, pickleball players would bring their own nets to set up for play. If it is determined that the community would prefer pickleball over tennis in the park, it may be possible to increase the number of courts.

Loop/Walking Trail

Input: *A meeting attendee asked for information about the existing loop trail at Long Branch Local Park and how it will change. Another attendee asked if some of the damaged asphalt and muddy places on the loop trail could be repaired before the larger project construction gets underway.*

Response: The existing loop trail at Long Branch Local Park is just under 1/4 mile. A new loop trail for the park is planned at approximately the same distance. The new trail will be wide

enough to accommodate maintenance access and will be ADA accessible for as much of it as possible. Operations staff will look at the existing trail for necessary short-term repairs.

Community Garden

Input: Support for expanding the existing community garden was voiced during the meeting as well as an idea to increase space for gardening by terracing gardens.

Response: The community garden at Long Branch Local is well-used and often has a wait list for plots. Expanding the existing garden is in the plan and studies for how and where that happens are underway. If you are interested in learning more about community gardening and/or requesting a garden plot, visit: <https://montgomeryparks.org/community-gardens/>

Electricity at Shelters

Input: There were a couple of questions asking if there will be electrical outlets in picnic/shade shelters at the park.

Response: The shelter for the stage at Long Branch Arliss Park will have electricity for performers and events. Parks will assess the feasibility and needs for electricity in other areas of the parks.

Educational Amenity

Input: There was a suggestion to have educational opportunities in the parks including educational signage, tree signs, identification of natural features and objects in multiple languages.

Response: Educational signage is a nice idea and can be considered by park designers and planners during the design process.

ACCESS

Long Branch Local Park

Input: Several participants noted that access to Long Branch Local Park from both the neighborhood and front of the Community Center is difficult, especially with a stroller or wheelchair. A few commenters asked for a formal access walk and stairs to the left side of the community center where a dirt path leads from the lower level to the soccer field next to the community garden.

Response: The topography at Long Branch Local is challenging and does make access difficult. It is a goal of the proposed plan to improve access and provide ADA accessible routes into the park where possible. Parks staff will study the access point and will explore options for a

constructed walk and stair from the left side of the community center as part of the park design process.

Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Park

Input: There were some questions asking about the possibility of connecting Garland Avenue and Whitney Street to the park with paved pathways. Another question asked about a possible connection to the planned Wayne Ave. Bridge.

Response: The intention is to pave connections from the park into the community north of the park at Garland Ave, Whitney St, and Walden Road. Each of these access points has significant tree critical root zones so to protect the existing trees, creative solutions will need to be explored by park designers. If these pathways prove feasible, they will provide a connection through the neighborhood (on streets and sidewalks) to the planned Wayne Ave. Bridge.

Connectivity between parks

Input: Is extending the Long Branch Trail through the parks and further north along stream valley being considered?

Response: Both natural surface and paved trails are being considered and studied for feasibility as part of the Long Branch Parks Initiative. We will have more to share about trail plans in the spring.

Input: There were a few questions about the difficult crossing at Piney Branch Road, the connections from these parks to the new Purple Line stations, and the impact of the Purple line on the parking area and entry to the Community Center.

Response: The current plans for the Purple Line show pedestrian crosswalks across Piney Branch Road and Purple Line tracks at both Garland Avenue and Barron Street. These crossings will connect with the Long Branch Trail south of Piney Branch Road. The trail will be improved from Piney Branch Road to the Domer Ave. bridge after the Purple Line construction. Improvements to the trail and connections north of Piney Branch Road are currently being studied as part of the Long Branch Parks Initiative.

Safety In The Parks

Personal Safety

Input: Several community members expressed concern about safety in these parks and brought up specific examples of violence, public drunkenness, and drug activity and asked for a response on how Parks plans to address these concerns.

Response: Through park improvements with new amenities, Parks anticipates more people using the parks during opening hours. More eyes on the park and more people in the park inherently increase safety. In addition, Parks staff is studying strategically lighting areas within each park for safe passage. Other measures such as “overt” security such as cameras and call boxes will be considered in the park renovation plans.

If you have safety concerns or see something that seems unusual or out of place in parks, please call Park Police at 301-949-8010

Homeless People in Parks

Input: Concern was expressed during the meeting about homeless people in Long Branch area parks and particularly Long Branch Arliss Neighborhood Park and Flower Avenue Park.

Response: Montgomery Parks is aware that people without homes use parks and sometimes set up encampments in or near park property. We also recognize that the causes of and solutions for homelessness in the Long Branch area are complicated. We know that many agencies, advocacy groups, law enforcement professionals, and aid organizations are working in Long Branch to help people in need and will continue to do so.

Coordination With Library And Community Center

Input: These parks are integrated with county spaces. How are you coordinating with the county, specifically with the library?

Response: We have been coordinating with library staff and community center staff by keeping them informed about our plans and working to create spaces that will be welcoming to their patrons and complement or enhance the visitor experience to the park and the civic function. We plan to continue coordination as the designs for each park evolves.

Environmental Considerations

Input: There was some concern expressed about tree removal and environmental impacts of construction. There was also a specific comment about oaks declining in this area and the need for new species.

Response: Some trees will be removed in each park because they are in declining health or because their health and longevity are currently or will be compromised by poor conditions or construction activity. But, Montgomery Parks values the existing tree canopy and the many benefits of mature trees. We will make every effort to preserve and make conditions better for the healthy, mature trees on these sites. We also recognize the importance of the urban

ecosystem for habitat value, stormwater mitigation, and public health. The projects will also include new tree planting.

Operations

Trash and Recycling Management

Input: *Several comments and questions focused on trash in the parks and the need for improved trash removal and maintenance.*

Response: The park renovations will include improved maintenance access for Parks operations staff. During the design process, park designers and operations staff work together to assess opportunities and challenges for improved maintenance in the proposed plans. Parks has a maintenance schedule for each park which will be reevaluated with the park improvements and new amenities. In addition, Parks often works with volunteer groups to help. Parks Watershed Volunteer Cleanup Coordinator is Valeria Espinosa: Valeria.Espinosa@montgomeryparks.org

Timeline

The anticipated timeline for these park projects:

- Spring 2023 – Long Branch Parks Initiative presentation to the community
- 2025 – Anticipated Construction start: Long Branch Local Park
- 2027 – Anticipated Construction start: Long Branch Arliss Park