



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting Report

Meeting Date:
May 17, 2010

Staff Attending:

Mitra Pedoeem
M-NCPPC Park Development Division (PDD)

Patricia McManus
Chief M-NCPPC PDD Design Section Supervisor

Ching-Fang Chen
M-NCPPC PDD Landscape Architect

Ellen Masciocchi
M-NCPPC PDD Project Contact

Brian Lewandowski
M-NCPPC PDD Engineer

Clare Runkles
M-NCPPC PDD Design Assistant

Rachel Newhouse
M-NCPPC Park & Trail Planning

John Marcolin
M-NCPPC Urban Design/Historic Preservation

Sabrina Pirtle
M-NCPPC Park Police

Steve Torgerson
A. Morton Thomas & Associates, Inc. Consultant

Project:
Woodside Urban Park-Facility Planning

Subject:
Community Meeting #1

Agenda

- Introduction - Patricia McManus
- Purpose of the meeting, facility planning process and schedule- Patricia McManus
- Green Space Guideline of Silver Spring CBD - John Marcolin
- Background, history and site analysis – Ching-Fang Chen
- Vision of the Silver Spring CBD and North and West Silver Spring Master Plan- Ching-Fang Chen
- Examples of successful urban parks - Ching-Fang Chen
- Question session - Patricia McManus
- Group input and discussion - Patricia McManus
- Summary - Patricia McManus

Staff Presentation

Vision (as presented)

- A forward-thinking park for future generations.
- Ecologically smart, culturally significant, and aesthetically pleasing.

Objectives (as presented)

- Promote urban connectivity.
- Protect and enhance environmental resources
- Provide a cohesive and flexible framework
- Offer unique and viable park experience

Public Comments and Discussion

There were differing opinions about the park from the attendees, which included approximately 11 people, the majority of whom live in the surrounding neighborhood. There were several nearby property owners who were strongly opposed to the skate spot and expressed concerns about noise, trash and the potential negative impact to their property value. Several others expressed support for the skate spot as an opportunity to provide teens with a recreational facility. Some like the park as it is and feel it's successful with minimal changes. Others thought the park was successful when it was originally built, especially when it included programming such as concerts, but indicated that the park has changed over thirty years. They commented that the park does not provide enough seating and tables, the facilities are deteriorating and outdated, and the park does not feel secure, especially for the aging population. Specific comments and suggestions are summarized below in general categories.

Current Uses of the Park

- Passageway to the CBD and local neighborhood
- A place to go with small children
- Active recreation: basketball for teens, tennis, ping-pong, playground
- Passive recreation: sitting, resting, watching children, walking dogs

Concerns with the Existing Park

Safety and Access

- The park is intimidating due to overgrown vegetation and secluded spaces
- There is poor visibility from the street into the park and within the park
- There is limited access from First Avenue and Ballard Street
- The road crossings are unsafe for pedestrians
- The lighting is poor at night and not evenly distributed
- There is unauthorized play on the basketball court after 9:00 pm at night
- The skate spot may attract kids from other neighborhoods
- There is sometimes delayed police response to calls from the neighbors

Facilities

- The facilities are outdated, deteriorating and depressing
- The fountain is too large
- The park includes underutilized recreational facilities such as handball and shuffleboard
- There are insufficient benches, picnic tables and trash receptacles
- There are too many steps

Space

- The park is not coherent or interrelated
- There is no central space that works for a large group
- There is wasted space along Georgia Avenue and Spring Street
- The park is over-programmed with activities and not flexible
- There is no open space for kids to run

Maintenance

- The existing trees are poorly maintained
- There was a suggestion for tree removal in the utility right-of-way
- The front of the adjacent Health & Human Services Building is poorly maintained
- The water feature does not function
- There is trash in the park
- There are broken hardscape surfaces

Interests and Preferences for the Renovated Park

General Comments

- The park should feel welcoming and safe
- The park should be tranquil, pleasant and serene
- Don't over-program the park so that facilities become outdated with time (provide flexible uses)
- Provide open green space; a passive park with some active components
- Design the park and activities to attract all age groups, including older kids and families
- The park should be more open and the spaces better integrated with the topography
- Improve park visibility from the street and within the park
- Improve pedestrian connections, ease of access, and safety
- Don't waste space
- Coordinate the park with the future Health and Human Services renovation project, gain more useable space for the park if possible, and continue to protect the neighbors with a buffer
- Consider locating recreational facilities in Fairview Park
- Assure the upkeep and maintenance of the park

Desired Facilities or Design Features

- Open play area
- More green space
- More benches, picnic tables and trash receptacles
- Well-maintained vegetation and flowers
- Wide walkways, curved walls
- Upgraded, adequate lighting
- Attractive, gentle water features
- Attractive stormwater management features
- Enhanced buffer from the parking area
- Playground, including long chain swings (the playground at Glen Echo Park is a good example)
- Community garden
- Basketball court with timed lights (some support this and some do not)
- Skate spot tucked in corner (some support this and some do not)
- Tennis (with wall to hit balls)
- Game tables or ping pong table

- A place to walk dogs
- Bury existing utilities

Additional Comments and Discussion

There were questions about who the park is intended to serve, and subsequent discussion that urban parks serve the surrounding residential neighborhoods as well as local businesses, mixed use communities and visitors to the area. There were also questions about how the facility plan would address the skate spot, which is intended to be an interim facility that would be evaluated after one year of operation. It is staff's intent to design the park in a flexible way so that the park can function with or without a skate spot. Staff also indicated that we would look into requests for additional picnic tables and trash receptacles (if needed) in the short term.