



MONTGOMERY PARKS

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
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MontgomeryParks.org

July 2026 - Open session for the Black Baseball & Softball Community Heritage Project: Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: July 14, 2026, 7-8pm

Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Purpose: Community input session on the developing Black Baseball & Softball Community Heritage initiative

Topics: Survey initial results, questions for analysis, and planning next steps together.

Next meeting date: August 4, 7pm on Teams

****NOTE –** Moved from second Tuesday to first Tuesday to accommodate vacation schedule

Meeting summary

The meeting focused primarily on reviewing audience survey results and discussing how the project can advance both historical interpretation and present-day community impact, especially with youth sports and development. Parks staff reiterated our goal of shaping the process together, including any areas of further inquiry for audience evaluation, and how to broadly share survey analysis and begin interpretation brainstorming. Being community-led remains central to project development.

The discussion evolved beyond historical interpretation into broader conversations about youth sports access, mentorship, community engagement, and revitalization efforts associated with Johnson's Park. Participants suggested partnerships with schools, churches, recreation agencies, businesses, and community organizations to build youth programs that connect historical legacy with contemporary community and youth development.

Agenda

- Intros
- Project summary/update
 - Past meeting topics
 - Oral histories, etc.
 - Email list growth
 - Survey
- Discussion

- View and discuss initial survey results - What do you want to know from the analysis?
- Next steps and shaping the process/project together
 - For example, how might the survey analysis best be shared more widely? What about the research to date? First steps for interpretive planning?

Detailed Meeting Notes

Project summary and updates

- Past meeting topics
 - February 2: 22 participants; in-person; introduce project and invite participation
 - March 10: 9 participants; Teams video call; project goals, input on audience survey questions, input for oral histories
 - April 14: 6 participants; Teams video call; oral histories, upcoming events for outreach, sandlot fields near M. Parks locations
 - May 12: 4 participants; Teams video call; updates and events
 - May 22: Parks circulated draft compiled research list of sandlot fields and teams for review, additions, etc.
- Oral histories, etc.
 - Informal interviews: 7 completed (summer 2025-winter 2026)
 - Oral histories: 6 completed, 1 pending (spring/summer 2026)
 - Photos shared/scanned: 25+ (Scotland, Good Hope, Linden, Poolesville, Johnson's Park)
- Email list growth
 - 36 people signed up before the survey
 - 52 signed up during the survey period
 - 88 total
- Survey (May 4 – June 30, 2026)
 - 123 responses
 - Postings at ballfields and rec centers
 - Webpage, e-newsletter, social media postings, press release
 - Email to project list, MCPS HS coaches, league contacts
 - Tabling at Jazz at Josiah Henson, Scotland Juneteenth community resource tent and Juneteenth game

Discussion – Survey results

Parks shared the initial results of the survey and invited meeting participants to suggest what they would like to know from the deeper analysis that the evaluation contractor will conduct.

General findings

- Nearly half of the respondents reported being unfamiliar with the history of Black baseball and softball in Montgomery County.
- Survey results demonstrate strong public curiosity and educational opportunity

- Open-ended responses showed interest in Montgomery County history overall, what the players did for day jobs, why baseball faded, etc.
- Top themes of interest (respondents could select 3 from a list of 9)
 - Teams, Players and Coaches (56.9%)
 - Local Identity and Pride (37.4%)
 - Women's Sports (36.6%)
 - Segregation (33.3%)
- Top engagement techniques (respondents could select 2 from a list of 12)
 - Walking tours (39.8%)
 - Audio stories/oral histories (32.5%)
 - Commemorative games (24.4%)
 - Public art (24.4%)

Next steps and areas of further inquiry

- Analysis will include slicing the data according to various variables – e.g. level of prior knowledge, demographics, etc.
- The responses to open-ended questions will be analyzed to pull out trends and meaningful insights into specific questions and areas of interest raised by the public.
- Invested community stakeholders will have the option to 1) see survey analysis early on; 2) help guide how Parks' rolls out survey findings more broadly, and 3) shape first steps for interpretive brainstorming.
- Meeting participants are interested in both hearing more from youth about the topics and engagement preferences in the survey and digging deeper into youth development itself.
 - The survey asked if youth development is a theme of interest.
 - Nearly all of the key historical figures (Pint Isreal, Lee Jordan, etc.), used sports as a vehicle for mentorship, leadership development, and community building.
 - The theme of youth development rated fairly low in the survey.
 - Meeting attendees expressed interest in getting a better understanding of community support for youth development, not as a theme, but rather in terms of sports and other activities that support young people today.
 - Ideas to consider are qualitative interviews and/or focus groups, including having youth be the ones to conduct a survey with other youth.

Discussion – Youth Sports

- Heritage Emory Grove is looking at youth baseball and maybe futsal as ways to center youth development as part of their community redevelopment activities. Johnson's Park is a key site for them.
- Sports history can serve as inspiration for present-day athletes. Sharing baseball history can be an entry point to discuss mentorship, leadership, education, etc.
- Community structure is different from it was in the past; the recreation department doesn't have many youth leagues; lots of youth sports are through private youth clubs and leagues.
- Creating sports opportunities that are more financially accessible, and part of community redevelopment will require a different model, partnerships, sustained funding, etc. Some ideas brought up:
 - Outreach through community groups – churches, rec centers, etc.
 - Police department; used to have the Police Activities League
 - Partnership with high schools
 - Could be mutually beneficial
 - Student-athletes could help coach and mentor, learning skills for themselves too and earning service hours
 - Could be a good opportunity for students who are already in the MCPS athletic department's leadership program
- Historic examples of community business sponsorships is a model worth revisiting. Businesses should be encouraged to reinvest in communities where they operate.
- General acknowledgement among the meeting group is that it will be tough and take a lot of conversations with a lot of people, and will require funding, but worth trying.

Next steps

- Next meeting: Tuesday, August 4, 7 – 8 pm.
- Montgomery Parks staff will share updates about the survey analysis timeline when available.
- Montgomery Parks and Heritage Emory Grove to talk through any appropriate involvement for Parks at the August 29 community gathering at Johnson's Park.
- Stay tuned for updates about Johnson's Park ballfield renovation.

*NB – Microsoft Co-Pilot AI assisted with these meeting notes based on the meeting's audio transcript.