



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

MCPB Item # 8

9/27/2012

September 20, 2012

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks
 Michael F. Riley, Deputy Director of Park: *MR*
 John E. Hench, Ph. D., Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *J. Hench*
 Mitra Pedoeem, Chief, Park Development Division *Mitra Pedoeem*

FROM: William Gries, Park Development Division *weg*
 Brenda Sandberg, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *BBS*
 Dominic Quattrocchi, Park Planning and Stewardship Division *DQ*

SUBJECT: Land Acquisition Recommendation
 Montgomery College Foundation, Inc., Property (a.k.a., Maryland College of Art and Design or MCAD)
 10500 Georgia Avenue, Wheaton, MD
 Carroll Knolls Local Park
 2.47 acres, more or less, improved

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the attached Resolution #12-111 with respect to the Montgomery College Foundation, Inc., property (the former Maryland College of Art and Design, hereafter referred to as the MCAD property), that resolves the following:

1. Designation of the 2.47 acre, more or less, improved, Montgomery College Foundation, Inc., property as an Urban Open Space Resource within the Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan.
2. Acquisition of the property for the negotiated purchase price of \$1,140,000 as Carroll Knolls Local Park, to be funded through the Legacy Open Space program.
3. Site restoration and demolition of the improvements on the property, not expected to exceed \$350,000, to be funded through the Legacy Open Space program.



Figure 1. MCAD Property (13 lots), Additional Outlot, and Potential Future Park Boundary

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The MCAD property, outlined in black in Figure 1, consists of approximately 2.47 acres on 13 undeveloped lots immediately west of Georgia Avenue and north of Evans Drive. The site is located on the west side of Georgia Avenue between Forest Glen and Wheaton and across Georgia Avenue from Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park. The site is within the Kensington-Wheaton Master Plan (but outside the Wheaton CBD Sector Plan boundary) and is part of the Sligo Creek Watershed. MCAD is improved with an unoccupied 14,000 square foot building with associated parking (60 spaces). The site also includes areas of lawn that currently function as community open space as well as young developing forest. Areas of open space in the current configuration have served as de facto public open space since the 1960's, being used by the local community for picnics, small-scale soccer, cricket practice, and children's play, among other observed activities.

The park that would be created with this acquisition will include several undeveloped road rights-of-way. Staff will pursue abandonment of these ROWs to create unified park ownership, as has been done for many other parks. In addition, a small outlot under different ownership is a logical future addition to this new park, and is currently in process to be acquired through donation. The total acreage for the proposed new park would be approximately 3.6 acres, providing a significant area of urban open space to serve the community. See Figure 2 for an aerial view of the potential park site.



Figure 2. Potential Park at MCAD Site: Aerial Photo Looking North (2005 image)

LEGACY OPEN SPACE DESIGNATION HISTORY

In December 2007, staff recommended that this site be added to Legacy Open Space program as an Urban Open Space. The Board did not approve adding the site to LOS (based on concerns over budget impacts and Legacy definitions), but did express support for the site as future parkland.

In January 2012, staff recommended to the Board that the MCAD site be reconsidered for LOS designation due to new policies and plans adopted since 2007 (see MASTER PLAN AND POLICY SUPPORT below) plus new 2010 census data indicating rapidly increasing population density in close proximity to the MCAD site. The Board supported the staff proposal to pursue negotiations with the property owner, with the caveat that Board approval of the LOS designation would be sought at time of contract approval and would be contingent upon adequately addressing issues of budget impact and policy support for the acquisition.

LOS URBAN OPEN SPACE CRITERIA ANALYSIS

The MCAD property meets the criteria for designation as an Urban Open Space and is proposed to be acquired as parkland using funds in the Legacy Open Space (LOS) project in the Commission's CIP.

The LOS Urban Open Space category is less restrictive than most of the other LOS open space types that focus on conservation of existing natural and cultural resources. Instead, Urban Open Space was created to provide open space of varying types to serve densely developed communities and can result in new parks that fall into several park classifications as described in the *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan* (approved July 2012). Examples of acquired LOS Urban Open Spaces (with their current park classification category in *italics*) range from a small wooded *Neighborhood Conservation Area* (Sligo Mill) to a landscaped, garden-like *Community Use Urban Park – Neighborhood Green* between single-family residential and a CBD (Chevy Chase Open Space) to a

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Countywide Urban Park - Civic Green that could include large areas of hardscape to support public events (Clarksburg Triangle). Note that there is no language in the urban open space description in the LOS Master Plan that prohibits elements of active recreation (e.g., athletic field or playground) within a park acquired under the Urban Open Space category.

Staff analysis of the MCAD site yields the conclusion that the site meets all three of the LOS Urban Open Space criteria (see sidebar), specifically that the site would:

- a) Provide a significant opportunity to increase access to public open space in a community with a high and fast-growing population density (Forest Glen/Wheaton);
- b) Protect scarce open space that currently exists in the urbanized Georgia Avenue corridor between Wheaton and Silver Spring; and
- c) Improve the green character of Georgia Avenue, a designated Green Boulevard of countywide significance in the LOS Plan.

Urban Open Space Criteria

LOS Functional Master Plan, p. 17

The Resource provides a significant opportunity:

- a) to increase access to public open space in communities with high population densities;*
- b) to protect scarce open space in an urbanized community; [or]*
- c) to improve the character of a green boulevard of countywide or regional significance.*

MASTER PLAN AND POLICY SUPPORT

In addition to the Legacy Open Space Plan, several recent planning and policy documents include recommendations that support the acquisition of MCAD as parkland.

Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan (Approved 2011)

The Wheaton CBD Sector Plan has specific recommendations to attempt to find more open space and active recreation areas near the CBD since limited open space is available within the CBD:

- Provide opportunities for urban recreation in the downtown.
- The Department of Parks should explore opportunities for large parks outside but near the Plan area to meet the standards established in the LPPRP (*Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, 2005*).

Vision 2030 (June 2011)

Newly completed park planning studies and tools are providing new standards for measuring needs for parks, specifically including the factor of walking distance to open space and recreational amenities. In Vision 2030, the relevant recommendations to the MCAD site include:

- A quarter mile radius is considered to be the distance within which a resident can reasonably walk to a park or recreation component. (Volume 1, page 98)
- Plan, design and create more unprogrammed flexible parks and recreation spaces, and features that are multi-functional or adaptable for multiple purposes. (Volume 3, Action 5.2b)

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Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan (Approved July 2012)

The PROS Plan includes a new focus on providing parks and facilities to meet the needs of increasingly dense urban areas of the County. Relevant recommendations and definitions in the Plan include:

- Community Open Space, a new facility type consisting of open, level grassy areas for informal recreational activities, is recommended to be provided through acquisition of additional land in areas with high population density and in urbanizing areas.
- Urban Wooded Area, a new facility type that consists of treed areas that create natural space within an urban environment, is recommended to be provided through acquisition of additional lands in existing and future urban areas.
- This part of the County (Georgia Avenue Team Area, per the 2005 LPPRP/PROS Plan) has an unmet demand for youth and adult rectangular athletic fields.



Figure 3. Quarter-Mile Service Area from Parks between Wheaton and Forest Glen

ADDITIONAL ACQUISITION JUSTIFICATIONS

MCAD offers a unique opportunity to provide both natural, green open space and other facilities for recreation to a densely developed suburban community, in addition to providing visual improvement along Georgia Avenue. Additional factors and details that support the importance of this site as parkland are briefly described below.

Demand Factors

- Community groups, elected officials (four County Council members and five members of the State delegation), and the Legacy Open Space Advisory Group continued to support this site as parkland over a period of five years.
- 2010 U.S. Census figures show a significant 15.5% increase in population within one mile of the property since 2000. Similarly, increasing numbers of families with children are indicated by overcrowded school populations, illustrated by the opening of a new elementary school about one-half mile from the site with an estimated population of 700 students by the next school year.
- Park managers report very heavy use of nearby park facilities and anticipate that this additional parkland will help relieve pressure on these nearby parks.

Opportunities

- The site provides an opportunity for a walking-distance park (within 10 minutes or ¼ mile) on the west side of Georgia Avenue, a *de facto* river of traffic that blocks pedestrian access to most parks in the area that are on the east side of Georgia Avenue (see Figure 3).
- The MCAD site is generally flat and conducive for a variety of recreational activities in addition to green open space, creating the potential to meet several identified facility needs in this community.
- Acquisition of the site implements the Green Boulevard concept (from the LOS plan and Georgia Avenue Concept Study) through the provision of a green respite along a heavily travelled route for the benefit of the local community and visual relief for users of the transportation corridor.
- The MCAD site is one of the few remaining non-park green spaces in the Sligo Creek Watershed.

PROPOSED USE

This property is proposed to be added to the park system as Local Park to provide a combination of green space and recreation space. Although smaller than a typical local park, this site has the potential to provide several facilities that fit within the local park classification (Park Classification System, 2012 PROS Plan). This proposed Local Park could include play equipment, a youth-sized rectangular field, a sitting area and shelter, a multi-use court, and an urban wooded area and community open space.

The proposed uses for the park can be thought of in two phases: Phase I being an interim park with minimal development, and Phase II being a fully designed and constructed local park.

Phase I

To create the platform for the interim park, the existing improvements (the building and most of the asphalt parking) will be removed from the property as soon as possible after acquisition and the land grassed and stabilized. To create a safe and usable interim park, additional site cleanup and improvements would include removal of non-native invasive plants and hazardous trees, installation of appropriate fencing and park signage, and other minor improvements.

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Phase II

The open space and facilities for this park in its ultimate stage will be determined through a future park facility planning process using needs identified in Park plans and studies and with input from local communities. The list of potential facilities that could be provided in this Local Park is quite broad, including play equipment, a youth-sized rectangular field, sitting and picnic areas, community open space, wooded areas, courts, and parking. A key element of this park is its unique ability to provide for an Urban Wooded Area and Community Open Space, two newly defined facilities in the PROS plan and a key factor in identifying this site as an LOS Urban Open Space. The site is also large enough to potentially provide a rectangular field, one of the most needed park facilities in this area of the County per the 2005 PROS Plan.

CONCLUSION

The MCAD property represents a unique combination of attributes: location in a dense and a recreationally underserved neighborhood, existing woods and open space, and flat topography that allows for a variety of recreation, all adjacent to Georgia Avenue, a designated Green Boulevard in the Legacy Open Space program. Maintaining this site for public use meets the long-term vision of the Legacy Open Space program, enhancing Georgia Avenue as an attractive and walkable community long into the future. Acquisition of the former MCAD site as a Local Park is consistent with the long standing tradition of the M-NCPPC in providing a quality park system to the public.

Attachment: Resolution #12-111

cc: Steve Chandlee
Mohammed Turay
Antonio DeVaul
David Vismara
John Nissel
Mary Ellen Venzke
Sean Dixon
Kate Stookey
Glenn Kreger



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
12-111

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission ("Commission") is authorized by Article 28, Section 5-101 of the Annotated Code of Maryland to acquire, develop, maintain and operate a public park system within the Maryland-Washington Metropolitan District; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County, Maryland (the "County"), has appropriated certain funds from the County's General Obligation Bond proceeds to fund the Commission's Legacy Open Space (LOS) Capital Improvement Program (CIP); and

WHEREAS, the Commission identifies properties that are eligible for acquisition with funds from the LOS CIP and the Commission recommends that the County acquire such properties with such funds; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery College Foundation, Inc. (the "Foundation"), owns certain property, known as Maryland College of Art and Design (MCAD), located in Wheaton, Maryland, containing 2.47 acres, more or less, of improved land (the "Property"); and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Planning Board on behalf of the Commission recommends that the County acquire from the Foundation the Property; and

WHEREAS, the Property meets parkland acquisition criteria as an Urban Open Space under the Legacy Open Space (LOS) Master Plan of 2001 and staff of the Commission recommends that the Property be designated as an Urban Open Space under said Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, there are sufficient monies available in the Commission's LOS CIP to pay for the acquisition and subsequent demolition and site restoration costs;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montgomery County Planning Board hereby designates the Property, as an Urban Open Space under the Legacy Open Space Master Plan of 2001; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montgomery County Planning Board recommends that the County acquire the Property from the Foundation with LOS CIP funds for a purchase price of One Million One Hundred Forty Thousand Dollars (\$1,140,000.00) and other valuable consideration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montgomery County Planning Board recommends that County uses LOS CIP funds, which are not expected to exceed \$350,000.00, for the demolition and site restoration costs for the Property.

* * * * *

This is to certify the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner _____, seconded by Commissioner _____, with Commissioners _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____ all voting in favor of the motion at its regular meeting held on Thursday, September 27, 2012 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Françoise M. Carrier, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board