



MCPB Item # \_\_\_\_\_

July 30, 2015

## MEMORANDUM

July 21, 2015

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *MFR*  
Mitra Pedoeem, Acting Deputy Director, Administration *Mitra*  
Dr. John E. Hench Ph. D., Chief, Park Planning & Stewardship Division (PPSD) *J. Hench*

**FROM:** Brooke Farquhar, Supervisor, Park and Trail Planning (PPSD) *Brooke Farquhar*  
Mark S. Wallis, Planner Coordinator, Park Planning and Stewardship (PPSD) *MSW*

**SUBJECT:** Cricket Field Site Selection

---

### Introduction

The [2012 Park Recreation and Open Space \(PROS\) Plan](#) estimated a need for four dedicated cricket fields large enough to serve all skill levels by the year 2022. PROS specifically recommended that Parks “provide 2 fields in the I-270 Corridor, and 2 in East County...” This site selection analysis recommends sites for the 2 fields in the I-270 Corridor to: 1) replace an existing temporary field at the Maryland Soccerplex that will soon be displaced by a soccer field; and, 2) to meet projected future needs. Site selection for the two fields needed in the East County will be analyzed in the future.

### Recommended Action

The Department of Parks seeks the following Planning Board actions:

1. APPROVAL of a dedicated cricket field at the southwest corner of Schaeffer Road and Burdette Lane in the South Germantown Recreational Park, including the cost estimate. Upon Planning Board approval, this field will be included in the Department of Parks recommended FY 17 – 22 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for design and construction.
2. APPROVAL of a second dedicated field, at the corner of Skylark Road and Piedmont Road at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park, if and when:
  - a. the Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD) chooses an alternative site for a combined community recreation and aquatic center, and;
  - b. property acquisition (from a willing seller) of the site is complete.

3. APPROVAL of the second dedicated field at South Germantown Recreational Park, if the Ovid Hazen Wells site is chosen for the MCRD facility and is therefore unavailable to Parks.
4. If Park Staff determines additional fields are needed in the I-270 Corridor, Staff will return to the Planning Board with an updated analysis to include Boyds Local Park and additional candidate sites.

## **Background**

As Montgomery County's population mix changes, so do the demands for different types of recreation. Cricket has grown rapidly in popularity. Cricket has been best known as a sport played in the countries of the old British Empire. It is estimated that the World Cup of Cricket will be watched by over 1 billion people. Ten years ago the *2005 Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan* stated that "A small group has been requesting a field for this sport for many years and it is felt that in the future we should try to create at least one cricket game field." The need for cricket facilities in our park system was brought up again by the public and confirmed throughout the planning process of the [Vision 2030 Strategic Plan](#) and the [2012 Park Recreation and Open Space \(PROS\) Plan](#).

Cricket is similar to "more traditional" sports in that it has youth players, adult county league players, and adult regional league players. The game can be played with one of two types of balls -- a soft yellow ball resembling a tennis ball or red hard ball similar to a baseball. Because the hard ball is hit farther, Parks is seeking sites large enough to accommodate fields with a diameter of 400 feet for the hard ball game. See **Attachment 1** for a quick graphic on how the game is played.

According to the Executive Director of the Maryland Youth Cricket Association, cricket today in the United States is where soccer was thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, Montgomery Parks built most parks with baseball and softball (diamond) fields. When the "new" sport of soccer came along, Parks overlaid soccer fields with seasonal goals in the outfields of diamonds for the fall season to quickly deliver the service and assess the overall service delivery strategy. The next step was to construct one dedicated rectangular field with one diamond in most parks. In 2001, soccer had become so popular that the Soccerplex was built.

There are a number of organizations and leagues that have been operating in our region to grow the sport of Cricket. They are:

Maryland Youth Cricket Association - Promotes the game to the youth

Washington Cricket League – Regional Hard Ball League

Montgomery County Premier League – Montgomery County Softball/Tennis Ball League

Germantown Kids Cricket Club – Germantown youth cricket group

## **Past service delivery approaches for cricket**

MNCPPC Montgomery Parks has experimented with a number of different approaches to provide for the sport of cricket over the past several years. Converting underutilized softball fields has been our main solution to date. While this generally works for some players, Parks has concluded that our priority should be dedicated fields large enough to safely handle all skill levels under all conditions.

What we have learned:

- Locating the cricket pitch between soccer fields resulted in soccer cleats ruining the pitch;
- Sharing a field between cricket players and baseball or softball players creates problems for both groups because of the hard surface of the rectangular pitch in the diamond outfield;
- Using clay as a material for the pitch causes maintenance burdens for both users and park staff;
- Converting softball fields to cricket fields does not always provide the necessary oval shape; and,
- Converting a softball field may not provide a field large enough for all skill levels – especially if cricket players attempt to use the hard red ball.

The first attempt by Parks at providing cricket facilities was a field overlaid on two soccer fields at Damascus Recreational Park. The pitch, located between the two soccer fields, was ruined by soccer cleats. The second attempt was to put two fields at Calverton Galway Local Park in Silver Spring, sharing a baseball field and a softball field. The hard surface of the pitch in the outfield of both the baseball and softball fields created both user and safety issues. In addition, the clay pitches created maintenance burdens, especially during the wet spring of 2015.

In spring 2012, Parks opened a dedicated cricket field at South Germantown Recreational Park in Germantown within the Soccerplex. The field, converted from a softball field, was too small for the higher skilled players who hit balls into the parking lot. The pitch had a concrete base overlaid with an indoor/outdoor carpet. The concrete base proved more durable than clay, but the carpet needed replacement very quickly. This field at South Germantown will soon need to be relocated to accommodate Phase III of the Soccerplex, beginning in the summer of 2015.

In the spring of 2015, Parks converted two softball fields to two cricket fields at Strawberry Knolls Local Park in Gaithersburg. These fields were constructed with a concrete base with a sports turf carpet overlay. Early reports indicate that this combination of materials has been well received by the cricket players and will become the Parks' construction standard for future cricket fields. Due to size constraints, Strawberry Knolls Local Park is best suited for the youth and soft ball games but not for the larger, hard ball game.

In the summer of 2015, two more softball fields were converted to cricket at Spencerville Local Park in Burtonsville. One is sized for the adult soft ball players and the other for the youth players only. These fields are being permitted at this time.

## **Site Selection Process**

The first priority of the site selection analysis is to replace the temporary field at the Soccerplex in Germantown, but with a larger field to accommodate the hard ball game. The temporary Soccerplex field has had high usage that will transfer to the new site. The second priority is to find a second site for new cricket fields as per Planning Board approved policy in the PROS Plan.

Staff considered sites not currently master planned for other park uses that are large enough for at least one 400-foot diameter oval field and 75 parking spaces, on existing parkland or on land proposed as additions to existing parkland. The candidate sites were then ranked according to whether they would be:

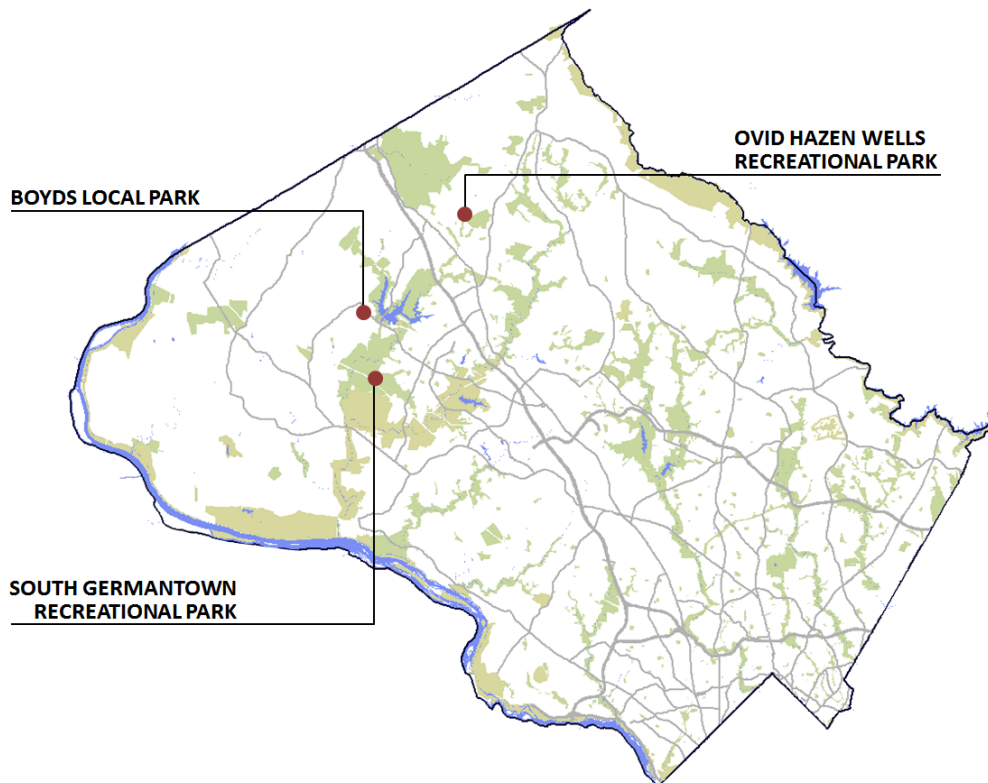
- in a regional or recreational park because of the efficiencies of field and park maintenance and management
- adjacent to already developed parkland to minimize Operating Budget Impact (OBI)
- on relatively flat terrain to minimize grading
- near the field currently being displaced
- have good access to I-270

The full list of site selection criteria is found in Attachment 2.

### **Proposed Sites**

Three sites were evaluated for construction of the dedicated cricket field(s) (Figure1):

- South Germantown Recreational Park – could fit 2 fields
- Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational park- could fit 1 field
- Boyds Local Park – could fit 2 fields.



**Figure 1: Cricket Fields Sites Analyzed: South Germantown and Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park and Boyds Local Park**

### South Germantown Recreational Park

The proposed area for the cricket field at South Germantown Recreational Park is a site at the corner of Schaeffer Road and Burdette Lane (Figure 2). These two roads are Rustic Roads -- roads in the Agricultural Reserve or rural parts of Montgomery County that exemplify the rural and agricultural character of the area. The site is currently under an agricultural lease and is relatively flat. Two houses, one mobile home, and one garage were on the site and have since been demolished. The staff recommendation is to relocate the existing cricket field from the corner of Schaeffer Road and Central Park Circle in the Soccerplex, to the corner of Schaeffer Road and Burdette Lane (Figure 3). This site is Staff's number one recommendation.

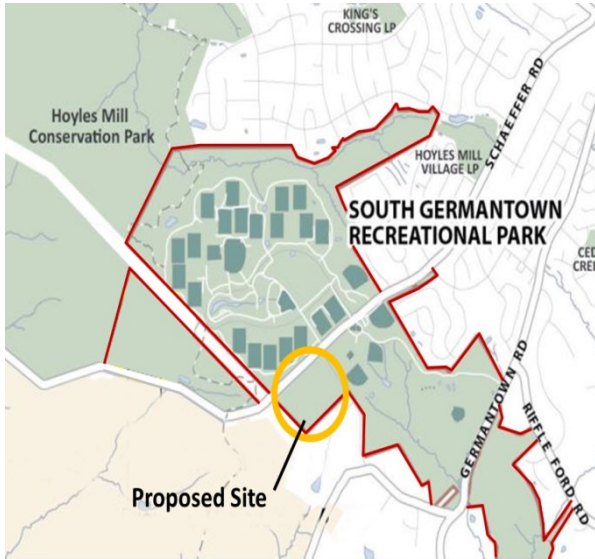


Figure 2: Proposed Site for Cricket field at South

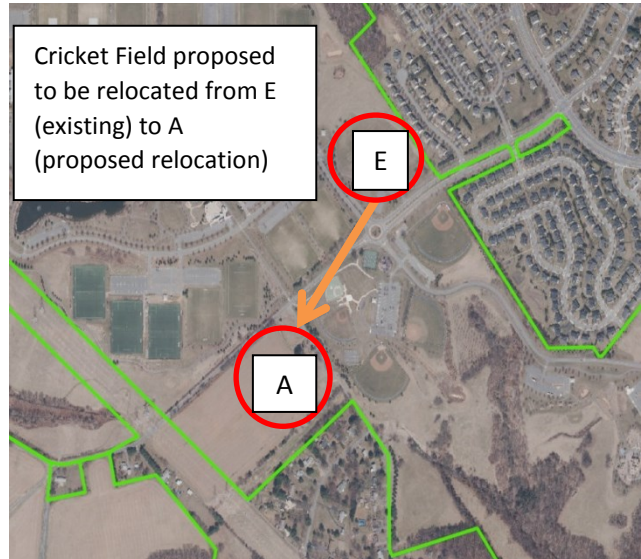


Figure 3: Aerial photo of site

### Rationale for Selection

The positive aspects of this site are:

- Scores highest on Site Selection Matrix
- In a Recreational Park which generally has the largest field sizes, regardless of sport
- Has an existing track record of cricket use at the same park
- Adjacent to existing developed park
- Commission owned
- Easy access to I 270
- Easy to grade
- Environmentally unconstrained
- Free of historical/cultural considerations
- Large enough for two fields if needed for future growth

The challenges for this site are:

- No specific park master plan language for cricket
- On the corner of two rustic roads limiting entrance design options;

Some neighbors feel there are enough fields in the Soccerplex and South Germantown Recreational Park site and that this site should be more passively developed. Also proximity to and views from single family homes to the south and visually adjacent to single family homes to the west will require adding screening and tree buffering.

### **Proposed Concept Plan for South Germantown Recreational Park**

A concept plan was completed to test the feasibility of the site for two cricket fields with the understanding that Parks would build only one field there at this time. Our first priority is to get one dedicated cricket field built in order to evaluate its performance, shown as Field A on the Concept Plan (Figure 4). Staff recommends that when funding is available, the second field be built at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park in order to ensure geographic parity of cricket opportunities in the Up-County area. However, this site would be suitable for the second field if Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park is not available.

In order for the Board to consider including this project in the FY 17 – 22 CIP, the Board must first approve the concept and preliminary cost estimate. A preliminary cost estimate was developed which is explained below.

The project would include earthwork, rough grading, vehicular paving and storm-water management for the entire site, as well as landscape berms and screen planting of adjacent residences. Additionally, the project will fully construct Field A, including irrigation and a pedestrian path that surrounds the field and connects to adjacent parkland.

The project includes the following:

- Grading and earthwork for the entire site
- Field A – 400' diameter cricket field with pitch
- Irrigation for field A
- Vehicle entrance road
- 50 parking spaces
- Vehicle turnaround and overflow parking (30 cars)
- Central pedestrian plaza
- Trail connection to existing park
- Loop trails around Field A and natural area of park
- Viewing mound for spectators
- Bio Retention Areas
- Hedgerow screen plantings
- Meadow plantings
- Forest conservation



If funding allows, staff would like to consider the possibilities of irrigation.

The total cost for the proposed project would be approximately \$2,136,000. Construction is proposed to be funded from a stand-alone PDF in the early years of the FY17-22 CIP. The cost for design would be approximately \$145,000 included in the Ballfields Initiatives PDF in FY16.

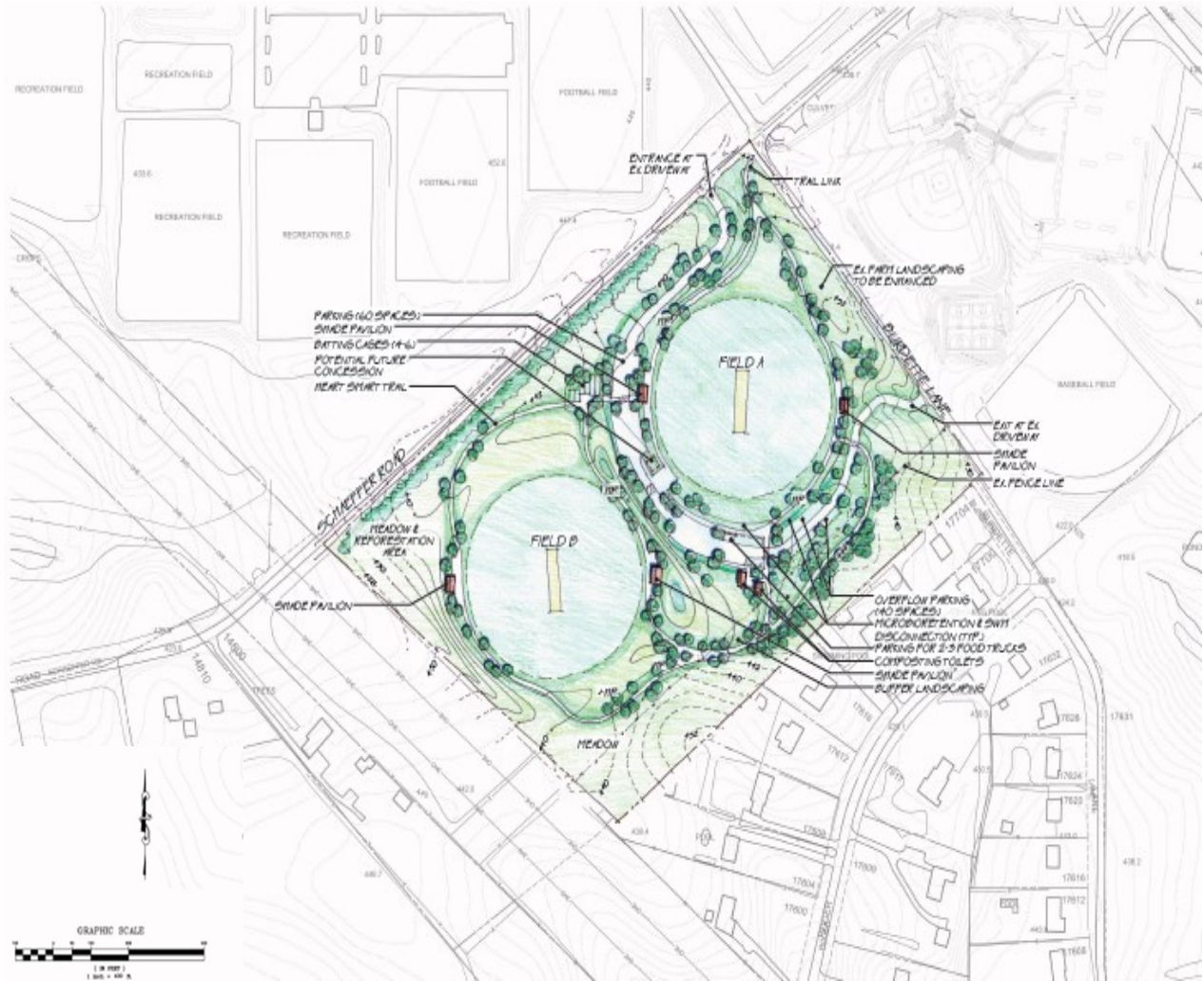


Figure 4: Concept plan of South Germantown site

### **Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park**

The second proposed cricket field is at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park in Clarksburg (Figure 5).

The site is in the northwestern corner of Piedmont Road and Skylark Road (Figure 6). The site can fit one cricket field with parking.

As noted in the Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park Master Plan, the Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD) has the first option for using the site for a future Clarksburg area combined Community Recreation and Aquatic Center. Analysis for this and several other MCRD sites will be initiated in FY 16. For this reason, this was not the number one choice, and accordingly dropped to number two.



**Figure 5: Locator map of Ovid Hazen Wells Recreation Park**

### ***Rationale for Selection***

The positives for this site are:

- Scores second on Site Selection Matrix
- In a Recreational Park which generally has the largest field sizes, regardless of sport
- Adjacent to existing developed park
- Easy access to I 270
- Easy to grade
- Environmentally unconstrained
- Has Park Master Plan language specific to cricket
- Free of historical/cultural considerations
- Large enough for two fields if needed for future growth
- Supported by the current Park Master Plan

The challenges for this site are:

- Does not have an existing track record of cricket use at the park
- Not all the property needed has been acquired
- Can only fit one field which leaves no room for future growth



In addition, there is no timetable for acquiring the property. MCRD is allowed to add this site to a list of sites for consideration for the Up-County Community Recreation and Aquatic Center. The Montgomery County Department of General Services (DGS) and MCRD are scheduled to commence and complete the site selection in FY 16.



Figure 6: Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park Active Recreation Area

### Boys Local Park

The third site analyzed, but not recommended at this time, is the undeveloped Boys Local Park (Figure 7). The site was recommended for a local park in the 1985 Boys Master Plan, and purchased in 2002. It includes approximately 23 developable acres. It scored considerably lower than the other two sites because it is not adjacent to an existing developed park, it has no existing infrastructure and it is likely to be more difficult and costly to grade and develop because of underlying diabase bedrock. A concept Plan was developed to indicate 2 fields are possible at this site (Figure 8).

The Boys Civic Association conducted an online community survey entitled “Community Preferences for Park Uses and Facilities at the Boys Local Park” dated June 19, 2015. (see Attachment 3).

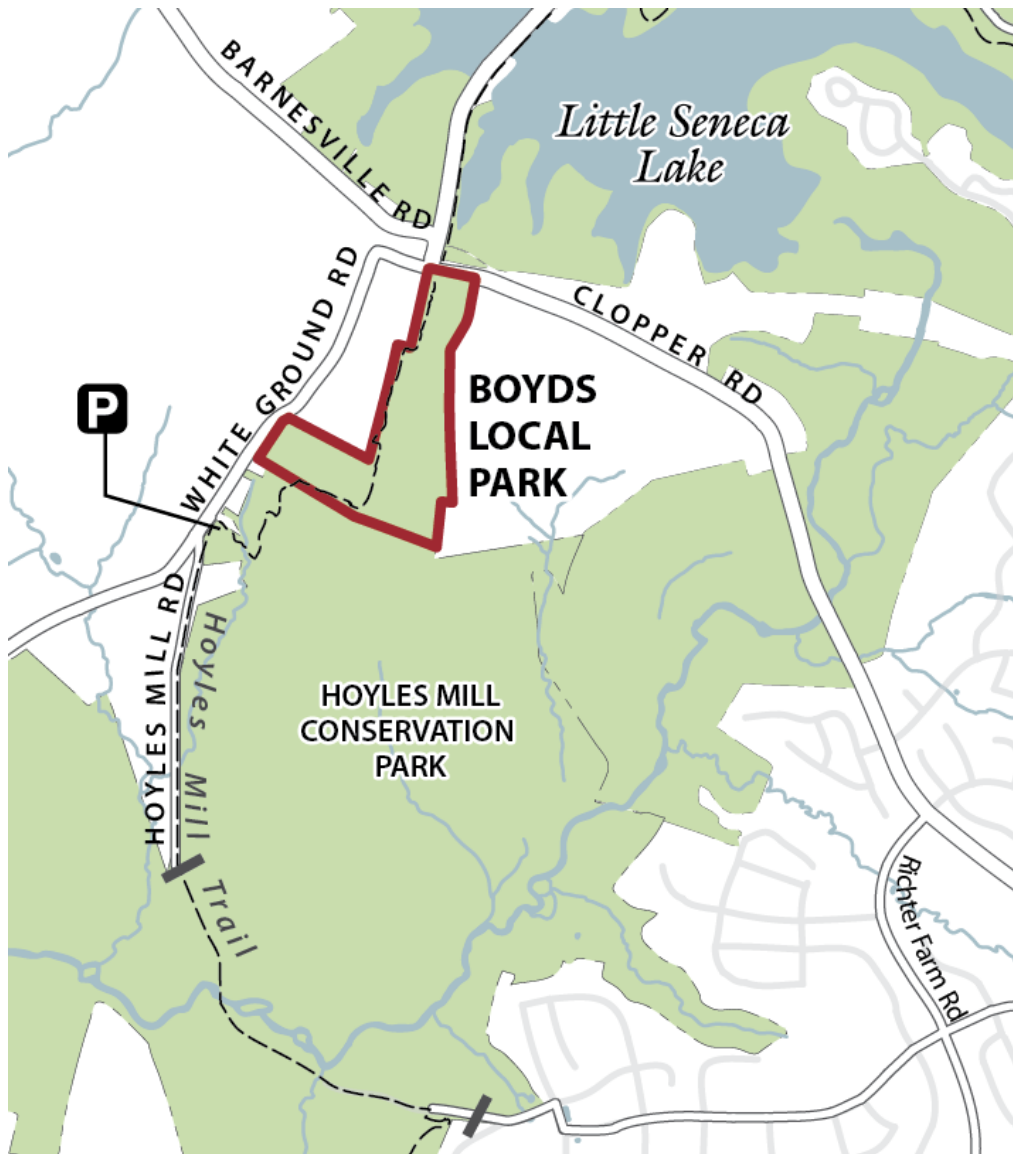


Figure 7: Locator map of Boys Local Park



Figure 8: Map of Boyds Local Park Concept Plan

## **Conclusion**

The Department of Parks strives to keep pace with unmet needs for various recreational facilities. Per the PROS Plan, we are recommending at least two dedicated full size cricket fields in the I-270 Corridor by 2022. Our highest priority is to first relocate the function of cricket that will be lost at Soccerplex. The site most suited for this first field is within the South Germantown Recreational Park. Our second priority is to provide one more field within the I-270 Corridor, preferably at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park, if the site is not chosen by MCRD for a community recreation and aquatic center. Our backup would be to build a second field at the South Germantown site. If, in the future, staff determines more fields are needed in the Up-County, staff will perform further analysis on additional sites including Boyds Local Park to present to the Planning Board.

## **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – How to Play Cricket

Attachment 2 - Site Selection Matrix

Attachment 3 - Boyd's Community Survey

cc:

John Nissel , Deputy Director Operations  
Tony DeVaul, Chief, Park Police  
Gabe Albornoz, Director, Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD)  
Jeffrey A. Bourne, Division Chief for Facilities & Capital Programs (MCRD)  
Catherine Matthews, Director – Up- County Regional Services Center  
Doug Ludwig, Chief, Northern Region Parks  
Dean Turnbull, Park Manager, South Germantown Management Area  
Wendy Hanley, Park Manager, Little Bennett Management Area  
Steve Root, Park Manager, Black Hill Management Area  
Kristi Williams, Chief, Public Affairs and Community Partnerships  
Leslie Saville, Montgomery Planning Area 3