



**2016 Recreation Guidelines: Briefing**

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**I. Description**

Briefing on the status of the 2016 Recreation Guidelines update.

Staff Recommendation: Discussion

**II. Summary**

Staff will provide a briefing and status update on the Recreation Guidelines update. This briefing will focus on:

- Project Research: new recreation trends, demographic changes, and input from developers, builders and designers.
- New Features: the interactive web tool, new facility types, including those for urban areas, the statistical modelling used for demographics to determine recreation demand.
- Changes to the Guidelines (see general list, page 7).
- Flexibility: provisions for a Custom Recreation Facility Tool for new recreation types.
- Issues for Discussion (see Section V, below)

**III. Project Overview**

The Planning Board is required to adopt guidelines that detail the standards and requirements for recreational facilities under §59.6.3.7 of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance. The guidelines are necessary, per §59.7.3.4.E.1.f, to determine the adequacy of recreational amenities as part of the development approval process, as applied through regulatory review of private residential development.

The 2016 Recreation Guidelines update was initiated in the summer of 2015 and the Planning Board approved the Scope of Work on October 1, 2015. The Scope of Work addressed the conditions and components of the updated guidelines, including geographical boundaries, contemporary recreation facility types, current demographic information and urban design standards for public and private recreational space.

The project team comprises a staff committee with representatives from each of the Planning Department's geographic areas, as well as from other divisions such as Research and Special Projects,

Information Technology and the Parks Department. The project team analyzed the following: recreational needs classified by location and age groups; recreational infrastructure and access to recreational opportunities, and ways in which to offer flexibility to applicants in the provision of recreational amenities.

#### **IV. Outreach**

Outreach engaged the County Department of Recreation and building industry professionals in the development and review of technical standards and Guideline recommendations.

Outreach included six meetings: two large-group discussions with Developers, Builders and Design Professionals and three smaller, in-depth meetings to review technical standards and facility selection flexibility. Work sessions with developers, builders and designers for the 2016 Recreation Guidelines made clear that the existing system, in place since 1992, was viewed favorably because it was straight-forward and predictable. Analysis from the Parks Department, suggestions from the development community and national recreation survey data helped to identify facilities to add to the 1992 list of recreation options based on newer trends in development. While the development community found the system's predictability desirable, the lack of flexibility was considered its biggest drawback.

Results from all outreach efforts are helpful and important to staff contributing to the development of recommendations for the 2016 Guidelines. Staff continues discussion with building industry professionals with further discussions to be scheduled. A presentation for the public will be scheduled for Fall 2016.

#### **V. Summary of Demand-Supply Process**

The 1992 guidelines provide a time-tested model for recreation facility assessment and established a consistent and predictable method for recreational assessment. The 2016 update retains the methodology of balancing supply and demand, as demonstrated by a brief overview of the interactive web tool.

#### **VI. Issues for Discussion**

##### **A. Policy and Process for Age-Group Exemptions**

*Recommendation: Formalize an age-group category exemption and establish the process for the Planning Board approval, with the required finding.*

Age-category exemptions may be granted for a single age group category (i.e., tots), subject to Planning Board approval of the Recreation Requirement Exemption Application. The application will be available through the Recreation Guidelines Web Tool, and must be completed at the time of site plan application.

1. For an age-category exemption approved by the Planning Board, total demand points must be satisfied by the recreation supply total shifted to the remaining age group categories. The application for an age category exemption must include the following:
  - I. A statement of justification;

- II. Detailed analysis of residential unit type distribution;
- III. A location-based demographic marketing study supporting the age-category exemption, with recommendation for requirements shifted to remaining age-categories.  
 PROS: Satisfy requests by developers for the means by which to better serve their intended clientele in particular demographics or locations.  
 CONS: Future shifts in building resident profiles must be addressed through site plan amendment.

B. Bonuses

1. *Recommendation: Provide a mechanism for master plans and sector plans to address recreational needs and deficiencies through incentives applied to facilities identified in specific master areas.*

Recreational amenities provided as a recreation requirement for a private residential development that fulfill a master plan recommendation (located in the applicable master plan area) are eligible for a 10% bonus in recreation supply points.

PROS: Provides a means by which to fulfill master plan or sector plan goals and serve the recreational needs identified in the plan.

CONS: May result in fewer recreation amenities within the project building or site.

2. *Recommendation: Provide a general incentive bonus of 10 percent if a proposed on-site recreation facility is made accessible to the public.*

Recreation facilities created as part of private residential development that are open and accessible to the public will earn a recreation supply bonus of 10% across all age group categories. Examples: urban plaza (not public open space), courtyard (not public open space), bicycle support station, etc.

PROS: Provides connections and public engagement, street activation, neighborhood amenity.

CONS: Public access conditions may apply.

C. Custom Recreation Facilities

*Recommendation: Provide a standard method for evaluating custom recreational facility proposals that are not offered on the standard facility list.*

Work sessions with developers, builders and designers for the 2016 Recreation Guidelines made clear that the existing system, in place since 1992, was viewed favorably because it was straight forward and predictable. While the building industry professionals praised the system’s predictability, the group emphasized the importance of flexibility in recreation choices and the ability to respond quickly to changing trends. In response, a Custom Facility Tool has been added to the 2016 Recreation Guidelines. This tool gives an applicant the ability to propose a custom facility or unique recreational amenity by way of a short questionnaire supplemental to the standard recreational facility list. The web tool allocates threshold recreation supply points based on three tiers of queries and, with the applicant’s responses, establishes the threshold

criteria and baseline recreation supply credit in preparation for regulatory review and Planning Board Approval

1. Threshold Questions: Additional queries? Information? Demographics?

PROS: Provide developers with the flexibility to offer facilities demanded by recreation trends, changing needs, or site specific issues.

CONS: Must to be evaluated per regulatory review on a case-by-case basis after meeting threshold criteria.

Threshold questions proposed for the Custom Recreation Facility Tool are listed below:

<b>Required Questions - Custom Recreation Facility Proposals</b>	
<b>1. What is the size of this facility?</b>	
A.	Less than 250 square feet
B.	250-499 square feet
C.	400 – 1,999 square feet
D.	Great than 20,000 feet
<b>2. Which choice best describes this facility?</b>	
A.	Indoors
B.	Natural – untreated
C.	Outdoors – Hardscaped (paved)
D.	Outdoors – Formally Landscaped
<b>3. Which choice best describes the lighting for this facility?</b>	
A.	Facility has lighting for users and spectators
B.	Facility has outdoor accent lighting only
C.	Facility has no lighting
<b>4. Does this facility provide recreational opportunity for tots with:</b>	
A.	No supervision
B.	Minimal Level of supervision
C.	Moderate to high level of supervision
<b>5. Does this facility encourage physical or aerobic exercise?</b>	
A.	Yes
B.	No
<b>6. Is this facility suitable for teens?</b>	
A.	Yes
B.	No
<b>7. Is this facility open to the public or publicly accessible?</b>	
A.	Yes
B.	No

D. Stormwater Management and Recreation Facilities

*Recommendation: Enable the design for dual-use of a Stormwater Management (SWM) facility that accommodates a recreation facility, reviewed under the Custom Recreation Facility process.*

Integrated Stormwater Management Design: A SWM facility located in a residential zone (typically, suburban) featuring *exceptional* design in accommodating a recreational facility, subject to the following:

1. Adequate Public Facilities finding: The SWM facility must be adequate to support and service the area of the subdivision.
2. Recreational facilities allowed, i.e., must be a “full” facility per the Guidelines specifications.
3. Coordination with the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and the Planning Department prior to site plan application submission.  
PROS: Provides opportunity for flexibility and innovation in recreation facilities and encourages design excellence for changing suburban development.  
CONS: Coordination of site, landscaping and SWM facility design prior to site plan application; DPS approval prior to submission of development review application.

E. Off-Site Recreation Facilities for Residential Zones (Suburban Areas)

*Recommendation: Reduce the measurable radius distance from which project may draw for an existing, off-site public recreation facility from one mile to ½-mile. Consider further reduction of the measurable radius to ¼ -mile.*

The 1992 Guidelines allow recreation supply credit (capped at 35% for each age group) for existing off-site public facilities located within one mile of the project site. Staff recommends that the distance radius be reduced to increase safety and feasible use for tots and children. Due to the multitude of existing facilities in down-county areas, and maximizing of off-site recreation facilities, staff suggests consideration of further reduction in the measurable radius to ¼-mile.

1. Reduction in allowable measurable radius distance to off-site recreation: change to ½-mile from 1-mile (issue = tot and child and safety).
2. Requirement for Facility Access Plan for off-site recreation demonstrating the route by sidewalk, trails or bikeway from the project site access point to the facility.
3. Planning Board finding: visibility, traffic controls, pedestrian conditions.
4. Constructing safe access to off-site recreation may require DPWT/DPS permitting & planned project phasing prior to filing site plan application.  
PROS: Providing mapped, safe routes for children and tots to off-site recreation facilities.  
CONS: May eliminate off-site recreation supply credit for some existing public facilities that are more than ½ mile from the project site’s access point.
5. The abundance of Parks Department facilities within the ½ mile site radius of potential project sites, particularly in the down-county or more urban-style areas, is demonstrated by the interactive Recreation Web Tool.  
PROS: Encourage the provision of on-site residential recreation for young children in those developments that are not designed for specific demographics.

CONS: More challenging site design, possible impact on density.

F. Recreation Supply Credit in Optional Method Zones (CR, CRN, CRT, LSC Zones)

*Recommendation: Grant recreation supply credit for recreation facilities constructed within Public Open Space provided under (CR) optional method development.*

The Zoning Ordinance (Section 6.3) requires Public Open Space under the optional method zones. Public Open Space may be provided on the project site or off-site from the project proposal. Current regulatory review practice allows an applicant to earn recreation facility supply credit for CR Zone amenities, including open space and recreational facilities.

Staff recommends that eligibility for recreation supply credit in optional method Public Open Space be further defined: (a) allow recreation facility supply credit for facilities constructed within Public Open Space either on-site or off-site; (b) do not allow recreation supply credit for the Public Open Space itself; (c) do not allow recreation supply credit for proposals utilizing fee-in-lieu provisions.

The recommendation is that recreation supply credit be applied for recreation facility construction, furnishings and equipment accommodated within Public Open Space; recreation supply credit would not be provided for the Public Open Space itself. Recreational amenities would be reviewed under site plan application as either (1) a Major Public Facility; (2) a Community Facility, or; (3) a Custom Recreation Facility. Enhanced recreation supply credit will be applied to those recreation facilities that fulfill a recommendation of a master plan or sector plan.

1. Allow recreation supply credit for facilities constructed within Public Open Space where the Public Open Space itself earns optional method CR points.
2. Allow recreation supply credit up to 35% for recreation facilities constructed within Public Open Space.
3. Allow recreation supply credit for recreation facilities constructed within Public Open Space that lies within ½-mile radius of the project site with an adequate Facility Access Plan.

PROS: Enhancement of Public Open Space, i.e., provision of outdoor theater or specialized public recreational facilities.

CONS: Trade-offs with credits for CR points and/or fewer private amenities provided for the developments residents.

### **2016 Recreation Guidelines – New Features and Changes**

- A new menu of recreation facilities suited to urban areas.
- An updated selection of general recreation facilities.
- Application of the Recreation Guidelines as a graphical, web-based interactive tool for project geo-location.
- Integration of updated 2010-2014 census data sorted by age groups and housing types using recently constructed dwelling units (2005-2014).
- Expansion of the five targeted age groups to six groups to include a new category for young adults (ages 18-34).
- Simplification of single-family detached housing categories
- A new facility category, “recreation elements,” for smaller, individual recreation elements that may be incorporated into a full facility.
- Elimination of benches and picnic tables as a “full recreation facility.”
- Elimination of recreation supply credit for site-frontage sidewalks in the public right-of way.
- A new menu for achieving incentivized master plan-recommended recreation facilities and those needs identified in Master Plans and Sector Plans.
- Integration of Parks Facilities and Trails locations with standardization of facilities list.
- Incentives for facilities accessible to the public.
- A new approval process for age-group exemption applications.
- Options for encouraging dual use of storm water management facilities for recreation components to achieve efficient, sustainable and high quality site design in changing suburbs.
- A tool for flexibility: the Custom Recreation Facility Tool proposals of new types or “custom” recreation facilities utilizing the web tool algorithm to establish supply values.

### **Next Steps**

Following this briefing and status update, staff will prepare the Draft 2016 Guidelines for the Planning Board Work Session.

Planning Board Briefing

June 23, 2016

Planning Board Work Session

July 21, 2016

Presentation of Finalized Document

September-October 2016