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

MCPB
Item No.
Date: 01/12/2017

2016 Recreation Guidelines: Planning Board Work Session

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Completed: 1/5/2016

I. Description: Planning Board Work Session for the 2016 Recreation Guidelines

Briefing on the status of the 2016 Recreation Guidelines.
Summary of public testimony and comments provided at public hearing.

Staff Recommended Actions: Discussion of issues identified through the public hearing with guidance provided to staff. (See Section VI, below).

II. Summary

The Montgomery County Planning Board held a public hearing on the Public Hearing Draft of the 2016 Recreation Guidelines on November 17, 2016. The public hearing record was held open until December 2, 2016. Two persons testified at the public hearing: Grace E. Fielder, President of GEF Associates and Mark Etheridge, Manager, Department of Permitting Services Water Resource Review. The Board has received correspondence from three development community professionals, including representatives of the Maryland Building Industry Association, as part of the public hearing record.

This document is intended to serve as the staff report for the Planning Board work session for the 2016 Recreation Guidelines, to be held on January 12, 2017. Section VI itemizes the discussion issues, summarizes the public testimony and provides staff responses to the issues raised at the Planning Board public hearing. The discussion is intended to enlist the Board's input and recommendations on issues raised at the public hearing, as well as the testimony received during the open comment period. Attachment 1 is a matrix that outlines testimony comments with staff responses and recommendations. Attachment 2 comprises the communications received in response to the publication of the 2016 Recreation Guidelines Public Hearing Draft.

III. Background

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 for regulatory review of private residential development.

The 2016 Recreation Guidelines update was initiated in summer 2015 and the Planning Board approved the Scope of Work for the guidelines on October 1, 2015. 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 and 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. The new development of a web tool facilitates scenario building for recreational amenities. Staff held three work sessions for development community professionals, in addition to consultations with the Montgomery County Department of Recreation and the Parks Department.

On June 23, 2016, a Recreation Guidelines Briefing was presented to the Planning Board that focused on issues identified by staff for discussion. The Board held a brief discussion of those issues and staff worked toward resolving them through solutions. The Planning Board approved the Working Draft as the Public Hearing Draft on September 29, 2016; the public hearing was held on November 17, 2016.

IV. Purpose of the Update

The 1992 Recreation Guidelines are being updated to reflect demographic shifts in the County, such as the aging of the population, and to attract young professionals through urban development around transit centers. The update also meets the increasing need in the County for active and passive urban recreation spaces to serve higher-density, mixed-use and infill development.

This need is amplified by the complementary desire to provide accessible recreational opportunities for all ages in residential areas, particularly for teenagers residing in urban areas or residents with disabilities. The creation of effective recreation for transit-oriented areas requires specialized attention to building form and open space, as well as recognition of new trends in recreation. The aim is to create a vision that joins new and existing facilities within a composite recreation system, which brings together the private and public realms.

V. Overall Recreation Guidelines Goals

The revised guidelines seek to encourage wider access to recreation opportunities by relating individual developments to broader, connected pedestrian systems and bikeways. They can also create opportunities for developers to fulfill recreation requirements under the site plan review process by providing incentives for off-site, master plan-recommended amenities within the optional method zones for urban infill sites. Also addressed is the opportunity to utilize existing public off-site recreation facilities and provide active pedestrian connections to those facilities in all zones.

The intent of the 2016 Recreation Guidelines update is to provide a flexible, yet predictable methodology that encourages innovative ideas that are uniquely suited to each proposed private, residential development. These ideas lead to new definitions of recreation that support social interaction and passive enjoyment along with physical activity. The needs of young adults and future generations are particularly considered across the spectrum of recreational options and trends.

The new guidelines will help fulfill the vision of an integrated, complementary system of recreational opportunities within the County. This system will utilize public and private resources efficiently to serve high-density residential areas as well as those featuring mixed-use development.

VI. Issues for Discussion

A. Recreation Demand and the Additional Age Group (Young Adults)

Testimony: Concern was expressed regarding the addition of a new age category, young adults (ages 18-34), to the age groups requiring recreational amenities in private residential development. Testimony from the Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA) suggested that the satisfying recreation demand of an additional age group (young adults) will impact the other age groups, resulting in fewer recreation facilities (supply) for the other age groups.

Reference: Chapter 2, Section 2.1, pages 6-8.

Staff Response: There is no impact on the supply of recreation facilities for the other age groups.

The demographics used for establishing recreation demand reflect the 2014 United States Census data for Montgomery County. Each age category reflects County demographics by its prevalence within the housing type(s) specified for each private residential development. The 1992 Recreation Guidelines incorporated young adults within the general adult category (ages 18-65); the former 1992 adult category was segmented for the 2016 update into two sections: young adult (age 18-34) and adult (35-65) in response to housing demand in urban areas for young professionals.

None of the age groups (tots, children, teens, adults, seniors) have been adjusted downward to accommodate the newly created young adult category. The supply requirements (recreation points) for all age groups remain the same as before. Recreation demand determination assumes that demand varies by the person's age and the type of housing or living unit.

Staff Recommendation: No change.

B. Bonuses and Public Accessibility

Testimony: Testimony on this subject expressed concern with the notion of requiring facilities earning a bonus to be available for open access to recreation facilities because of liability issues incurred by the developer and the future homeowners' association.

Reference: Chapter 7, Section 7.2.1, page 31.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends retaining the public access option. The intent of the provision is to offer a bonus for publicly accessible facilities; it is not mandatory. Prospective developers could, if they choose, include a publicly accessible facility and receive a 10 percent bonus. In addition, any development, developer or homeowners' association may provide public access, i.e., trail access or other public access, if so desired, for land under their control.

C. Stormwater Management and Recreation Facilities

Testimony: The MBIA acknowledges the desirability of utilizing land area associated with stormwater management (SWM) facilities for recreational amenities; however, there is concern about coordination of these uses and cooperation with other Montgomery County agencies in realizing these functions.

Reference: Chapter 7, Section 7.2.3, page 31.

Staff Response: Planning staff has recently organized meetings with the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and other state and local agencies. The agencies are enthusiastic about enabling the provision of recreation facilities associated with stormwater management facilities, particularly those that incorporate environmental site design.

The opportunity for integrating stormwater management facilities and recreation should be available to accommodate design of suburban housing sites with environmental restrictions that present difficult conditions for development. This opportunity for integration could also be explored for those sites for which a developer seeks concurrent review of preliminary and site plans. Because of the agency coordination required, staff recommends that the combined stormwater management--recreational facility be proposed as a "custom facility" that will allow the pre-application coordination with other county agencies.

Planning staff continues to work with DPS and other agencies to formalize and expedite this process.

Staff Recommendation: No change.

D. Limiting Supply Points for Seating Areas

Testimony: MBIA also expressed concern regarding credit for open space and picnic and seating areas, stating that benches may be as attractive to a community as a tot lot or a basketball court.

Reference: Table 3.7 Recreational Facilities and Supply Values, pages 16-17.

Staff Response: The ubiquity of the "seating area" employed over the years to satisfy recreation demand is common knowledge. As the revised guidelines developed, staff considered carefully the role open space and seating areas could play in achieving the broader goal of encouraging active recreation, integrated open space and usefulness for all age groups.

Staff proposes that the seating area be retained as a recreation facility, however, not as a "full" facility, but as a *recreation element*. A recreation element may be used as a component added to a

full recreation facility to create a specialized theme, focus a setting or part of a setting for an age group. Recreation elements may be integrated into small community or recreational spaces through small-scale specialized components, of which a seating area may be part. Supply credit for open spaces remains the same as the 1992 Recreation Guidelines. New types of open spaces have been added to the facilities list with increased supply credit.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends retaining the expanded menu of recreation elements that includes picnic or seating area

E. Walkshed Distances

Testimony: Comments were also received expressing concern about credit for off-site, publicly-owned recreation facilities with respect to the reduced limit of maximum walking distance, along with the measurement methodology, citing significant cost to the developers. The comments suggest that there is no justification for a reduction in the 1-mile radius distance between a proposed housing development and a publicly accessible recreation facility, and that such a reduction denies supply credits to the developer.

References: page 20, 27-28 (Section 6.1 and 6.2)

Staff Response: The 1992 Guidelines employed a 1-mile radius without regard to specific accessibility or barriers to accessibility. The newly created Walkshed Calculator identifies those streets, routes and facilities that are verified as accessible to pedestrians within the set walking limit, currently proposed as ½-mile, that is a 10-minute walk for an adult and a 15-minute walk for a child.

The decision to recommend reducing the walkshed from 1 mile to ½-mile in the maximum distance differential between a housing development and an existing public facility is based on the following:

1. Current research establishes typical walking threshold for children at ¼ mile. Contemporary studies consistently cite the ¼ mile distance as the most appropriate for children for access to local parks, neighborhood open spaces, including the following:

    - *The London Plan: Spatial Strategy for Greater London: Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation (2006).*
    - *National Parks and Recreation Association: Safe Routes to Parks (2016).*
    - *Microscale Audit of Pedestrian Spaces: James Sallis, PhD, Family Medicine and Public Health, University of California, San Diego (2016). [includes children and adults]*

    These resources support the Recreation Guidelines proposal to utilize the ½-mile actual walkshed applied to the distance metric between housing and off-site public recreation.

2. The 1992 Recreation Guidelines were created during a period of suburban expansion. They were intended to serve, primarily, suburban housing developments, dependent on automobile travel. The goal of the 2016 guidelines is to include urban solutions, denser mixed-use neighborhoods

under development in Montgomery County's central business districts, life science centers and town center developments – environments that are pedestrian and bicycle-oriented.

3. The 1992 Recreation Guidelines capped credit for off-site public recreation facilities within one mile at a maximum of 35 percent of supply points for each age group. The 2016 Recreation Guidelines Public Hearing Draft retains the 35 percent cap for off-site supply points of each age group. However, it is significant that for recently approved site plans utilized as Recreation Guidelines case studies, the 35 percent cap was reached regardless of whether the distance metric was the ½-mile walkshed or the former 1-mile general radius.

4. The proposed Recreation Guidelines Geolocation Tool automatically identifies all publicly accessible recreation facilities within the walkshed range of ½-mile. This tool incorporates all M-NCPPC Parks Facilities (itemized), Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) recreation facilities and fields, and the Montgomery County Department of Recreation Centers (including aquatic centers and senior centers). Thus, the inventory of off-site public recreation facilities is significantly increased with the aggregation of the location and facilities information.

   Staff Recommendation: No change is recommended to the ½ mile walkshed criteria. Employ the Walkshed Calculator with the ½-mile distance metric to determine applicable off-site publicly accessible recreation facilities. The ½-mile walkshed is a reasonable limit, particularly in context of studies that recommend ¼-mile limits; credit for public off-site recreation does not appear to be negatively affected; finally, the menu for off-site public facilities choices has been expanded to include MCPS facilities and the Department of Recreation facilities.

F. Urban Open Space vs. Suburban Open Space and Recreation Types for Tots

Testimony: MBIA expressed concern that the 2016 Recreation Guidelines are limited and inflexible for high density urban projects where there is insufficient space to provide recreation facilities satisfying recreation demand for the tot age category. The association suggested that attention be given to additional types of facilities that provide by-product amenities that are suitable for tots.

Reference: Table 3.7 Recreation Facilities and Supply Values page 16-17

Staff Response: The approach of the 2016 Guidelines is to provide flexibility through these means:

1. The 2016 Guidelines add 46 new recreation facilities types; 26 facilities have been carried over from the 1992 Guidelines.
2. Seven new types of open space are offered in the new menu for efficient use in urban areas:
   - Open Grass Area – Urban Lawn (2,000 square feet)
   - Renovated Stream or Naturalized Area
   - Ornamental Garden or Sculpture Garden
   - Urban Plaza
   - Through-Block Connection
   - Neighborhood Green (1 acre)
   - Pocket Green (1/4 acre)

The menu of smaller public outdoor spaces is intended to work with both optional method projects (earning CR credit) or standard method projects. Each of these areas may be fitted attractively with recreation elements that are designed for tots and children: interactive sculptures, interactive outdoor musical instruments, landscaped-pavement designed games, landscaped baby mazes, spray grounds. These elements carry generous supply credits that allow such urban spaces to satisfy tot and children age group requirements.

The goal of the new guidelines is to utilize high-value urban outdoor space in multiple, flexible ways, and encourage creativity in the design of outdoor public spaces for children and tots as alternatives to the standard tot lot. Developers may also propose custom recreation facilities to meet this goal.

3. Master Plan Recommended Facilities for Public Open Space:
Within the optional method zones, a housing development may propose off-site public open space (POS) that may simultaneously satisfy private residential recreation requirements. The provision of a master plan (or a Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan developed by the Montgomery Parks Department) recommended open space or facility is entitled to a 20 percent bonus in recreation supply credit for all age groups.

Staff Recommendation:

(a) Amend Table 3.6 to add additional recreation elements to increase the number of elements that appeal to tots and children that may be used in urban open spaces. Examples include landscape mazes and interactive sculpture topiaries. Also, applicants may propose new elements for consideration.

(b) Direct staff to evaluate additional recreation opportunities for tots that are suitable for urban environments and can be incorporated into the guidelines during the next evaluation.

G. Inclusive Recreation

Testimony: Grace Fielder, founder and principal of the planning, landscape and environmental firm GEF Associates in Laurel, MD, emphasized the urgent and growing need for inclusive recreation facilities, both for children and adults within Montgomery County. Inclusive recreation provides meaningful benefits for many adults, young adults and children with conditions such as autism or sensory processing issues through vestibular and balancing stimulation.

For example, the indoor Sensibility Gymnasium offers inclusive sensory adaptive activities and play for tots, children and teens. Other recreational settings, such as Bank-Shot Sports Facilities, offer opportunity for adults, young adults, teens and children with and without disabilities to play alongside one another**,** not against each other. The game is played on a unique basketball course (or tennis and soccer) with brightly colored backboards ranging in size and shape, making the game more enjoyable to play. Bank-Shot set-ups are particularly suitable for urban settings as the facilities utilize a small footprint while maximizing the number of players.

Staff Recommendation*: Amend Table 3.7 to add the following* facilities:

- Add: Inclusive Outdoor Recreation Center for Adults

- Add: Indoor Sensibility Gymnasium
- Add: Bank-Shot Sports Court for Children, Teens and Adult.

Staff will propose facility supply values for these items at the work session.

H. Enhancing Pedestrian Connections on-site and off-site (and Pedestrian Bridges)

Testimony: Grace Fielder (GEF Associates) suggested additional attention be paid to pedestrian connections both on and off site, with more safety measures, ADA compliance and neighborhood connectivity. Pedestrian bridges should be added to Table 3.7 with significant supply points.

Staff Response: Pedestrian connections are included within the Active Connections category under Nature Trail, #1, Table 3.7. (It should be noted that DPS-required sidewalks along a proposed site frontage are no longer eligible for recreation credit.)

Staff Recommendation*:* Revise the heading/description of "Nature Trail" to incorporate pedestrian connections or trail system extensions in Table 3.7. This recreation facility includes both on-site and off-site options as one facility. *Amend Table 3.7 to add the following facility:*

- Add: Pedestrian Bridge as a facility under Active Connections.

I. Combination or Sequence of Open Spaces

Testimony: Grace Fielder (GEF Associates) suggested that multiple public open spaces that are connected receive exponentially increased supply credit. for example, two pocket greens recommended by the master plan and interconnected with a through-block connection provide a value greater than the sum of the three parts.

Staff Response: All master plan-recommended public open spaces earn a 20 percent bonus. Specific physical sequencing of open spaces by means of a linked linear public open space (such as the through-block connection) may be considered for an aggregate bonus. The likelihood that such a project will be an optional method application eligible for CR credit should be noted as well.

Staff Recommendation: No change.

J. Facilities Specifications, Details and ADA References

Testimony: Grace Fielder (GEF Associates) provided very useful comments regarding facilities standards, specifications and details, and cited the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 as applied to the 76 cut sheets that constitute the Facilities Guidelines (Chapter 8).

Staff Recommendation*:* These changes have been correlated with M-NCPPC Parks Standards, Graphics Standards and National Recreation and Parks Association Standards. Chapter 8, Facilities Guidelines, will be amended to address ADA language for each facility type. Examples will be provided for the Planning Board's first work session.

Next Steps

- Planning Board Work Session #1, January 12, 2017.
- Additional Planning Board Work Sessions, as needed.
- Adoption of 2016 Recreation Guidelines, anticipated in Winter-Spring 2017.

Attachments

1. Outline of Testimony and Staff Response
2. Public Hearing Comments

Attachment 1

Montgomery County Planning Board Work Session – January 12, 2017: 2016 Recreation Guidelines Public Hearing Draft – Worksheet

	Issue	Page	Testimony or Comment	Staff Recommendation	Planning Board Direction
A.	Recreation Demand and Age Groups	6 - 8	Concern that the addition of a new age category for young adults, would result in fewer facilities offered for the other five age groups.	There is no impact on the supply of recreation facilities for any age group. No age group category has been adjusted downward to accommodate young adults. Recreation demand is derived from the 2014 census according age group & occupied housing type.	
B.	Bonuses and Public Accessibility (Section 7.2.1)	31	Comments addressed concern with the notion of requiring public access for facilities earning supply bonuses due to liability risks incurred.	Retain the OPTION for public access to a recreation facility.; the intent of the provision is to offer a bonus for providing publicly available facilities; it is not mandatory.	
C.	Storm Water Management and Recreation Facilities (Section 7.2.3)	31	Comment acknowledges the desirability of utilizing SWM for recreational amenities; however, there is concern about coordination of these uses and cooperation with other Montgomery County agencies in realizing these functions.	Staff continues to work with DPS & DEP to formalize and expedite the review of SWM facilities. This section allows the developer to integrate SWM facilities and recreation facilities where the topography and site layout allow duel uses. Recreation should be treated as a Custom Facility to allow pre-application coordination.	
D.	Limiting Supply Points for Seating Areas (Table 3.7, #63)	16 - 17	Concern was also expressed regarding adequate recreation supply credit for open space and the "reduction" of supply points for picnic-seating areas., "Benches may be as attractive to a community as a tot lot or a basketball court"	Supply credit for open spaces remains the same as the 1992 Recreation Guidelines. Seven new types of open spaces are added to the facilities list with increased supply credit. The "seating area" is retained, however, not as an "full" facility, but as a recreation element -- a component added to a full facility to create a specialized theme, focus a setting for an age group. Recreation elements may be integrated into small community or recreational spaces through small-scale specialized components, of which a seating area may be part.	

	Issue	Page	Testimony or Comment	Staff Recommendation	Planning Board Direction
E.	Walkshed Distances (Sections 6.1.1; 6.1.2; and 6.1.3)	20, 27 - 28	Concern about (a) Reduction in the distance limit between proposed housing and an off-site public recreation facility from 1-mile to ½ mile; (b) methodology of the Walkshed Calculator; (c) loss of recreation credit for those public facilities more than ½ mile from the housing site; (d) greater costs to developers. Commenters propose that the 1992 Guidelines use of the 1-mile radius (as the crow flies) should be retained.	Retain the 1/2-mile distance limit as proposed. (a) The 1/2-mile distance limit is based on recent studies that show the most suitable distance to public recreation from residential development as a one-quarter-mile range, "Home Range." (b) The Walk-Shed Geo-Location Calculator establishes the actual walkable distance to public recreation facilities from the proposed development site using sidewalks, trails, and neighborhood roads. the tool accounts for pedestrian barriers and inaccessible. (c) The 1992 Guidelines were envisioned for the suburban expansion—a car-oriented environment. The 2016 Guidelines address mixed use, dense urban environments that are pedestrian and cycle oriented. (d) The 2016 Guidelines retain the 1992 maximum cap for off-site public facilities supply credit: 35% of supply points for each age category. In scenario studies using approved site plans, the 35% cap for recreation supply credit was reached easily within the ½ mile walkshed. (e) The public recreation facilities database has been updated to include MCPS athletic facilities and those of the Department of Recreation. This updated GIS layer allows developers to utilize those facilities for recreation supply credits.	

	Issue	Page	Testimony or Comment	Staff Response - Recommendation	Planning Board Direction
F.	**Urban Open Space and Recreation Types for Tots (Table 3.7, Column D1 Tots)**	16 – 17, 17 – 21, 76 - 79	Concern that the 2016 Guidelines are limited and inflexible for high density urban projects with insufficient space to provide recreation facilities for the tot age category. Suggests need for additional types of facilities that provide that are suitable for tots.	(a) The 2016 Guidelines feature 46 new recreation facilities types. (b) Seven new smaller types of open space are offered in the facilities menu for urban areas that may be attractively designed with recreation elements for tots and children, such as interactive art and music components. (c) The goal of the new guidelines is to utilize high-value urban outdoor space in multiple, flexible ways, and encourage creativity in the design of outdoor public spaces for a range of uses, including children and tot play. (d) Optional method projects may propose off-site Public Open Space that may simultaneously satisfy recreation requirements. Master Plan recommended amenities earn a 20% bonus. (e) Developers may propose custom facilities. Recommendations: Expand the menu of recreation elements to include additional components for tots and children for use in urban open spaces. Evaluate additional recreation opportunities for tots that are suitable for urban environments.	
G.	**Inclusive Recreation Facilities (Table 3.7)**	27	Comments emphasized the urgent and growing need for inclusive recreation facilities, both for children and adult. Inclusive recreation provides meaningful benefits for many adults and young adults with conditions such as autism	Add the following facilities to the Recreation Facilities List (Table 3.7): (a) Inclusive Outdoor Recreation Center for Adults (b) Indoor Sensibility Gymnasium (c) Bank-Shot Basketball Court (d) Bank-Shot Tennis, Soccer, Tri-Sports	

Attachment 1
Montgomery County Planning Board Work Session – January 12, 2017: 2016 Recreation Guidelines Public Hearing Draft – Worksheet

	Issue	Page	Testimony	Staff Recommendation	Planning Board Direction
H.	Enhancing Pedestrian Connections and Pedestrian Bridges	16 - 17	Comments suggested additional attention to pedestrian connections both on and off site, with more safety measures, ADA compliance and neighborhood connectivity. The comments included the proposal to include pedestrian bridges with significant supply points.	Pedestrian connections are included within the Active Connections category under Nature Trail. (DPS-required sidewalks along a proposed site frontage are no longer eligible for recreation credit.) Recommendations: a. Table 3.7, #1. Revise the heading/description of "Nature Trail" to incorporate pedestrian connections or trail system extensions. This recreation facility includes both on-site and off-site options as one facility. b. Table 3.7. Add Pedestrian Bridge to Recreation Facilities List under Active Connections.	
I.	Combination or Sequence of Open Spaces	31	Comments suggest that multiple public open spaces that are linked by public open spaces connected receive exponentially increased supply credit. For example, two pocket greens recommended by the master plan and linked by a through-block connection provide a value greater than the sum of the three parts.	All master plan-recommended public open spaces earn a 20 percent bonus. (Section 7.7.2) Specific physical sequencing of open spaces by means of a linked linear public open space (such as the through-block connection) may be considered for an aggregate bonus. However, the likelihood is that such a project will be an optional method application and eligible for CR credit, which may lessen the need for further recreation credit. No change is recommended.	

Attachment 1

Montgomery County Planning Board Work Session – January 12, 2017: 2016 Recreation Guidelines Public Hearing Draft – Worksheet

	Issue	Page	Testimony	Staff Recommendation	Planning Board Direction
J.	Technical Specifications	35 - 105	GEF Associates comments provided useful information regarding general facilities standards and technical specifications, including reference to the 2008 ADA Amendments Act.	These changes have been correlated with M-NCPPC Parks Standards, Graphics Standards and National Recreation and Parks Association Standards. Examples will be provided for the Planning Board's first work session.	

MARYLAND BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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TESTIMONY OF RAQUEL MONTENEGRO

BEFORE THE

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD ON 11/17/2016

2016 RECREATION GUIDELINES

Good Afternoon Chairman Anderson and members of the Planning Board. My name is Raquel Montenegro and I am testifying this afternoon as a representative of the Maryland Building Industry Association Montgomery County Chapter. Let me start by stating that overall the proposed Guidelines are a very good tool that are clearly the result of a significant amount of thought, planning and programming. The new interactive web tool is an excellent addition and we commend the Planning Department staff for the time and effort that went into its development. That said we do have some concerns and some suggestions that we offer and ask will be taken into consideration as these Guidelines move into the final phase of consideration and potential adoption.

- Recreation Demands / Age Groups. Expanding age groups to include "young adults" is not in itself a major issue, but including this additional group means providing more active recreation facilities that could lead to less recreation facilities for other groups.
- Reducing the Number of Points for Common Recreation Facilities. Is it fair to reduce the credit for open spaces and picnic/seating areas that may be just as attractive to community residents as a tot lot or a basketball court?
- Bonuses for Making a Recreation Facility Open to the Public. While we recognize this proposal is well intentioned, it does not recognize the liability issues confronted initially by the developer and ultimately by the HOA.
- Incorporating Stormwater Management facilities into Recreational facilities. Again, this is a well intentioned suggestion but raises issues of coordination and cooperation with other County Agencies.

Continued ....

- Proposed ½ Mile Walkshed. While we do not contest that the recreation facilities should be within a traversable area, we question why the existing 1-mile radius has been reduced by 50%. There does not seem to be any justifiable reason for this reduction which not only denies the developer the ability to gain credits for recreation facilities that may be within a mile radius and easily accessible, but also has the potential for significant extra cost for the development of a community.
- Downtown Urban vs Suburban Open Space Areas. The proposed Guidelines are limited and inflexible when it comes to high density urban projects where there is insufficient space to provide, for example, the types of recreation facilities suitable for tots that would generate sufficient points. Attention needs to be given to providing points for additional types of facilities that could, as a by-product, provide stimulation for tots.

As a general comment, we also express some concern with the fact that an applicant may comply with all elements of the Guidelines, identify and select recreation facility options that meet or, more likely, exceed the points requirement and then must engage in a lengthy negotiation with staff to receive approval to proceed.

We would also recommend that as the Planning Board considers these proposed Recreation Guidelines the issue of coordination by the Parks Department with the Planning Department be made an integral part of the Guidelines adoption. We strongly recommend that the Parks Department participate in and conform their review process to align with the MNCPPC development review process ensuring that site plan level park design and park engineering shall be reviewed and approved by Parks and timely communicated at the same time as site plan review by Planning Department.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

GEF

November 17, 2016

Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910

Attn. Chairman

Reference: Recreation Guidelines Item # 9 November 17, 2016

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft 2016 Recreation Guidelines. The guidelines are forward thinking with the inclusion of the 18-34 age group, and web-based tool. We are in general agreement with the guidelines, but feel that the supply value and design predictability for facilities should be increased.

The following areas should revisited:

1. **Pedestrian:** Add pedestrian connections both on and off site which would include Supply Value for enhancing existing connections for safety, ADA compliance and connectivity.
2. **Pedestrian bridge:** Supply values should be significant for bridge, the interactive tool could show locations where bridges are needed/desired in communities.
3. **Open Space:** All open space should receive higher Supply Values and when those areas enumerated in the PROS Plan are combined the supply values should increase exponentially. For instance, two pocket greens that are interconnected by a through block connection have greater value than just the total of each item added together.
4. **Facility Guidelines:** Options should be clear for each facility, how wide is the trail, what the minimum length is and what it the value of that length. What slope for open space, what is the minimum width of the Through Block Connection? How many exercise stations should be provided? If the Guidelines is to use a specific Parks Department Standard it should be referenced.
5. **Guidelines:** should reference ADA Amendments Act of 2008.
6. **Guidelines** should reference standard with or "latest industry standard" added.
7. **Supply Values:** State specifically when Supply Values are locked, so applicant can know what they need to move the project forward.

G.E. Fielder & Associates would be happy to provide further clarification to M-NNCPPC with regards our comments. Attachment A contains some specific items for each Chapter of the guidelines.

Sincerely,
G. E. FIELDER & ASSOCIATES, CHARTERED

G. E. Fielder, RLA, ASLA, AICP
President

Cc. Mary Beth O'Quinn, Planner Coordinator

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GEF

Recreational Guidelines: September 2016 Comments
November 8, 2016 - Letter to Chairman

Chapter 1

Section 1.2 Purpose of the Update

- Reference the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 ADA change that occurred since the last Guidelines were approved.

Chapter 2

Section 2.1.1 Recreation Trends

- Supply value that is attributed to the PROS Plan recommendations should be increased as the value of land is generally greater in particular urban plazas, through block connections neighborhood green and pocket greens. We even feel that it would be good to create an incentive that encourages the use of these facilities together and that the values be greater than just the point total.

Section 2.1.2 Recreation Needs

- Needs should be increased to include pedestrian connections and pedestrian bridges, supply value should be high on those areas were connections are critical, these would be both on and off site connections (on and off site refers to applicants property).
- The innovative inclusionary playgrounds refers to children. A consideration should be given to provide an option for adults. Autistic adults will utilize the swinging, swaying and quiet places found in an inclusionary playground, but the physical sizes of the equipment and spaces will need to be "upsized" to better serve those individuals.

Chapter 3

Section 3.4

- Add in additional facilities, consider:
  - pedestrian connections
  - inclusive adult playgrounds
  - pedestrian bridges
- Specify sizes on all items (17, 18 and 19 specify square feet).

Chapter 4

Section 4.1. The process is not clear, as to when the Supply Values are locked -in.

Section 4.1.6 Exporting the Recreation Adequacy Report

- Walksheds will vary based on age and destination. How will the different age groups be accounted for in the walkshed analysis? Is a greater emphasis applied for an older or younger group? Is walkshed dependent upon available parking?

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Recreational Guidelines: September 2016 Comments
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Chapter 5

Section 5.1.4 Custom Recreation Facilities Proposal

- Step 2 add age group targets.

Chapter 6

Section 6.2 Enhance Recreation

- Supply credit needs to be defined, and criteria provided as to how to obtain it. Will the applicant be responsible for working with the Department of Parks to design facilities or will they build facilities that are designed and permitted already?
- It is not clear that there will be Supply Value credit for enhancements to existing access to offsite facility?
- Is there Supply Value for improvement in trail connections?

Chapter 7

Section 7.2 Bonuses

7.2.1 Public Accessibility

- Further consideration needs to be given to this option. On the surface it sounds good, but it brings liability and responsibility to a development and potentially to the homeowners association. The number of bonus points needs to be increased from 10% to 20% and be tied to the complexity of providing for public access.

Chapter 8

- Facilities should each have a separate sheet.
- Facility sizes, quantity, and design criteria should be included for each facility, not all contain size and design criteria.

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From: MCP-Chair
To: Oquinn, Marybeth
Subject: FW: Miller and Smith Testimony on the Recreation Guidelines
Date: Tuesday, December 20, 2016 9:58:27 AM

From: Spalding, Bob [mailto:bspalding@millerandsmith.com]
Sent: Thursday, November 17, 2016 7:50 AM
To: MCP-Chair <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>
Subject: Miller and Smith Testimony on the Recreation Guidelines

Chairman Casey and Planning Board Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed Recreation Guidelines.

Miller and Smith supports the points raised in the testimony of the Maryland Building Industry Association.

We appreciate the increased clarity and additional options within the proposed guidelines.

We recommend maintaining the 1-mile radius for evaluation and scoring. We are in an era of increased connectivity and requirements for even more connectivity. Therefore, it is inconsistent to treat new subdivisions that are often required to provide that increased connectivity as if they are suddenly inaccessible to public facilities that are within one mile. While we support pedestrian accessibility, a recreation facility can still be part of the community if it is a short bike ride or drive from their home.

Sincerely,
Bob

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