

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

A RESIDENT'S GUIDE TO

# Montgomery County Parks

Parkside Headquarters, 9500 Brunett Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20901, 301-495-2500 [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

This is one in a series of brochures designed to help you understand the park planning, land use planning, zoning, subdivision and site plan processes in your Montgomery County community.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Montgomery County Planning Board sets regulations and policies for park acquisition, planning, development and fees. Through its Department of Parks, it is responsible for construction, maintenance, renovation and operation of the more than 32,900 acres of parkland in Montgomery County. Montgomery County parks offer passive and active recreational facilities, historic sites, nature centers, conservation areas, gardens, as well as a number of programs and events.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ENHANCES PARK PLANNING

Park development is closely coordinated with master planning (see *A Resident's Guide to the Land Use Master Planning Process in Montgomery County*) and the subdivision process (see *How to Participate Effectively in the Subdivision Process*.) It begins with user surveys and other information collected to determine communities' needs for recreational facilities. That information becomes the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), which the Planning Board uses to make decisions on land acquisition and future park development.

Residents have an opportunity to suggest park development projects in their neighborhoods every two years. The resulting Capital Improvements Program (CIP) sets priorities for funding, design and construction. The park planning and design processes for specific park properties are two more opportunities for adjacent communities to be a part of park development.

A portion of your property tax is dedicated to fund a substantial portion of the park system's

annual operating budget, which is subject to public comment before County Council approval in May.

Notices for meetings are posted at

[www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org).

To register as a speaker, please call 301-495-4600. Copies of the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, CIP Budget, Operating Budget, or plans for parks are also available online or at the Commission's Headquarters, 8787 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring. (See *A Resident's Guide to Public Participation in Land Use Decisions in Montgomery County*.)

## LAND ACQUISITION AND USE

Since 1927, when the first parcel of land was acquired in the Sligo Creek Stream Valley, the park system has steadily grown. Parkland is frequently dedicated as a requirement of the subdivision process. Often there are houses or other buildings on these properties, many of which are historic and safeguarded for future preservation.

Two-thirds of the land in regional parks remains undeveloped in its natural state to help protect the environment. Several thousand acres of parkland are shared with public schools, providing elementary, middle and high school children with quality playing fields and playgrounds. Most indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities and some community buildings, operated by the Montgomery County Department of Recreation, are located within parks.



## LEGACY OPEN SPACE

Designed to conserve and steward land of exceptional value, Legacy Open Space is a multi-year, \$100 million program to preserve natural and heritage resources, water supply, urban open space, trails and farmland. Support for the initial \$33 million phase came from County general obligation and park bonds. The Planning Board purchased the first four properties under the Legacy Open Space program, including Bucklodge Forest, northeast of Barnesville; Sligo Mill in Takoma Park; the Leet property in South Germantown; and the Radl property, part of the River Road Shale Barrens – a total of 263 acres protected. As the largest Legacy acquisition, the 766-acre Hoyles Mill Conservation Park in Boyds preserves the property's areas of significant natural value while providing passive recreational opportunities. Approximately 30 percent of future funding for the Legacy Open Space Program will come from corporations, state and federal agencies, and private gifts to ensure the land's availability for future generations. The Legacy Open Space program intends to:

- Safeguard thousands of acres of exemplary and diverse natural resources;
- Contribute to the protection of water supplies by reducing development of thousands of acres of land in the Patuxent River watershed;
- Create a national model for heritage protection that embraces historic preservation;
- Connect new and existing open spaces to form a 100-mile "ribbon of green" trail from the Potomac River to the Patuxent River via the Northwest Branch;
- Protect precious green spaces in urban areas.

For more information on Legacy Open Space, call 301-650-4360 or 301-650-4361.

## RECREATIONAL PARK USES

Whether it's biking along a paved path, hitting a home run, kicking a goal or skating on an Olympic-sized ice rink, Montgomery County parks has something for everyone. Within more than 395 developed parks, you'll find:

- Athletic fields for soccer, football, softball, baseball and other sports
- Playgrounds for children of all abilities
- Lakes for boating, canoeing and fishing
- 200 miles of hiker/biker and equestrian trails
- Indoor ice skating and in-line skating rinks

- Campgrounds for tent and recreational vehicle camping
- Nature centers
- A horticultural education center
- Reservable recreation buildings
- Picnic areas for small and large groups
- Indoor and outdoor tennis and basketball courts
- Miniature trains and carousel
- Riding stables

While providing a wide variety of park facilities, two-thirds of all five regional parks must remain undeveloped in accordance with Commission policy. Along with conservation and stream valley parks that enhance the County's environment, these undeveloped areas provide significant opportunities for exploration, hiking, and horseback riding. Nature centers in regional parks help you learn more about your environment and its wildlife habitat. Trail maps show you how to access these undeveloped areas from your neighborhood. Go to [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org) for more information.

## SPECIAL PARK FACILITIES

What's the perfect setting for a wedding or other social event? How can you learn more about ways to landscape your property? How are the County's equestrian and agricultural heritages preserved? Are there any facilities for special events? Montgomery County's parks are the answer.

For more information on special park facilities visit us on the web at: [www.mncppc-mc.org](http://www.mncppc-mc.org) or [www.wehavethewhere.com](http://www.wehavethewhere.com)

## PUBLIC USE OF PARK FACILITIES

Unless otherwise posted, public parks are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Parks are open from sunrise to sunset, except where lights are provided for a fee on tennis or basketball courts. Athletic fields, group picnic areas and recreation buildings are in such high demand that reservations should be made and a permit obtained. Under certain circumstances, recreation buildings are available to community groups at no charge. Use of parks for special events, such as festivals and fund-raisers, require special permission from the Director of Parks and you may incur additional charges for police and support services. For more information on permitted facilities, call 301-495-2525 or go to [www.parkpermits.org](http://www.parkpermits.org)



## VOLUNTEERING IN PARKS

Join the thousands of people each year who volunteer more than 50,000 hours of their time to our parks. They clean up streams, remove non-native invasive plants, monitor bluebird boxes, assist at archeological digs, patrol parks, help with nature center programs, maintain gardens, assist in offices, aid in special events and more. For information about current needs and how you can get involved, check out our website at [www.parksvolunteers.org](http://www.parksvolunteers.org) or call 301-495-2504.

### **MONTGOMERY PARKS FOUNDATION**

301-767-0002, [www.montgomeryparksfnd.org](http://www.montgomeryparksfnd.org)

The Commission recognizes the important role private donors can play in enhancing the County's parks. To facilitate private support, the Commission established the non-profit Montgomery Parks Foundation in 1992 to serve as a vehicle for individuals, groups and businesses that wish to fund unmet park needs. The Foundation facilitates a wide range of community-based improvements to Montgomery County parks, including land acquisition, plantings, facility improvements and special programs. All donations to the Foundation are fully tax-deductible.

## PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

With limited public dollars, the Commission cannot always provide the recreational facilities and services needed to keep pace with a growing population. That's why partnerships with private organizations, corporations and donors as well as with other government agencies are important to the development of our park system.

Some examples of successful public/private partnerships include:

***South Germantown Recreational Park*** is filled with extensive park facilities, in large part, because of private partnerships. The park now includes the Maryland SoccerPlex (with 24 soccer fields planned, a lighted championship field with seating for 1,500, and an indoor recreational complex), which involved state, County and Commission resources, as well as private funds, particularly from the Maryland Soccer Foundation. The indoor aquatic facilities opened January 2006, and the tennis facilities will also be available through partnerships. Two 18-hole miniature golf courses and a splash playground are now open, and Commission crews have restored the dairy barn. Public funds will add a nature center, trails, playgrounds and many other features.

***Hadley's Playground at Falls Road Local Park*** is a \$700,000 initiative of a mother who has a child with a disability. Hadley's Playground features communication devices used by autistic and blind children, and a rubberized ground cover made of recycled tires.

***The Shirley Povich Field in Cabin John Regional Park*** and similar facilities at ***Ridge Road Recreational Park*** and ***Montgomery Blair High School*** were developed with the financial support of local baseball clubs.

***The Rickman Farm Horse Park***, a scenic 100-acre horse farm in Boyds, now offers therapeutic riding and includes a historic house, indoor equestrian arena, stables, barns, a two-apartment chalet and other buildings.

***The Woodstock Equestrian Center*** is a 772-acre park in Beallsville that will be developed for trails, pasture, conservation areas, stables, dressage, jumping and equestrian decathlon competitions through fund-raising activities.

## **SAFETY IN MONTGOMERY PARKS**

Safety and security are paramount in Montgomery Parks. Rules and Regulations governing the operation of M-NCPPC's public parks and facilities are available online at [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org). Playground Safety Inspectors conduct frequent checks on play equipment to ensure that it meets national and manufacturers' requirements. To help ensure that your park experience is a safe one, the nationally accredited, highly acclaimed Maryland-National Capital Park Police patrol on horseback, motorcycles, bicycles, boats and on foot. Park Watch programs and K-9 units enhance their ability to prevent crime. To report vandalism or suspicious behavior in parks, call 911 and request Park Police or 301-949-3010. For non-emergency situations, call 301-949-8010.

## **ORGANIZATION AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Along with land use planning, administering Montgomery County's park system is one of the two main functions of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Montgomery County Planning Department. For maintenance, the system is divided into Northern and Southern Regions. To report problems or submit maintenance requests in parks, please call 301-670-8080. For general information about parks and maps go to [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org).

301-495-2500	Director, Department of Parks
301-495-4500	Director, Planning Department
301-949-8010	Park Police Division - park safety
301-495-2525	Park Permit Office -Silver Spring
301-495-2480	Park Permit Office - Germantown
301-495-2595	Department of Parks General Information Line
301-495-2504	Volunteer Services
301-495-2535	Park Development Division - park construction and renovation
301-650-2600	Natural Resources Division - park environmental issues
240-773-3400	Northern Region – park information
301-299-1971	Southern Region – park information
301-650-4370	Park Planning and Resource Analysis
301-670-8080	Service Center- parkland tree problems and park maintenance



## **The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission**

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301-495-2500  
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M-NCPPC encourages the participation of all individuals in its programs and services. For accommodations, please call 301-495-4600, TTY 301-495-1331.

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