

January 7, 2004

Memorandum

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Chief,
Countywide Planning Division
FROM: Rachel Newhouse, Park Planning and Resource Analysis (301)650-4388
Tanya Schmieler, Park Planning and Resource Analysis (301)650-4392
SUBJECT: Reconstruction Plan for Winding Creek Local Park

REQUESTED PLANNING BOARD ACTIONS

1. Approve plan and cost estimate for renovation of Winding Creek Local Park as a basis for updating the "placeholder" PDF in the Planning Board's recommended FY05-10 Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

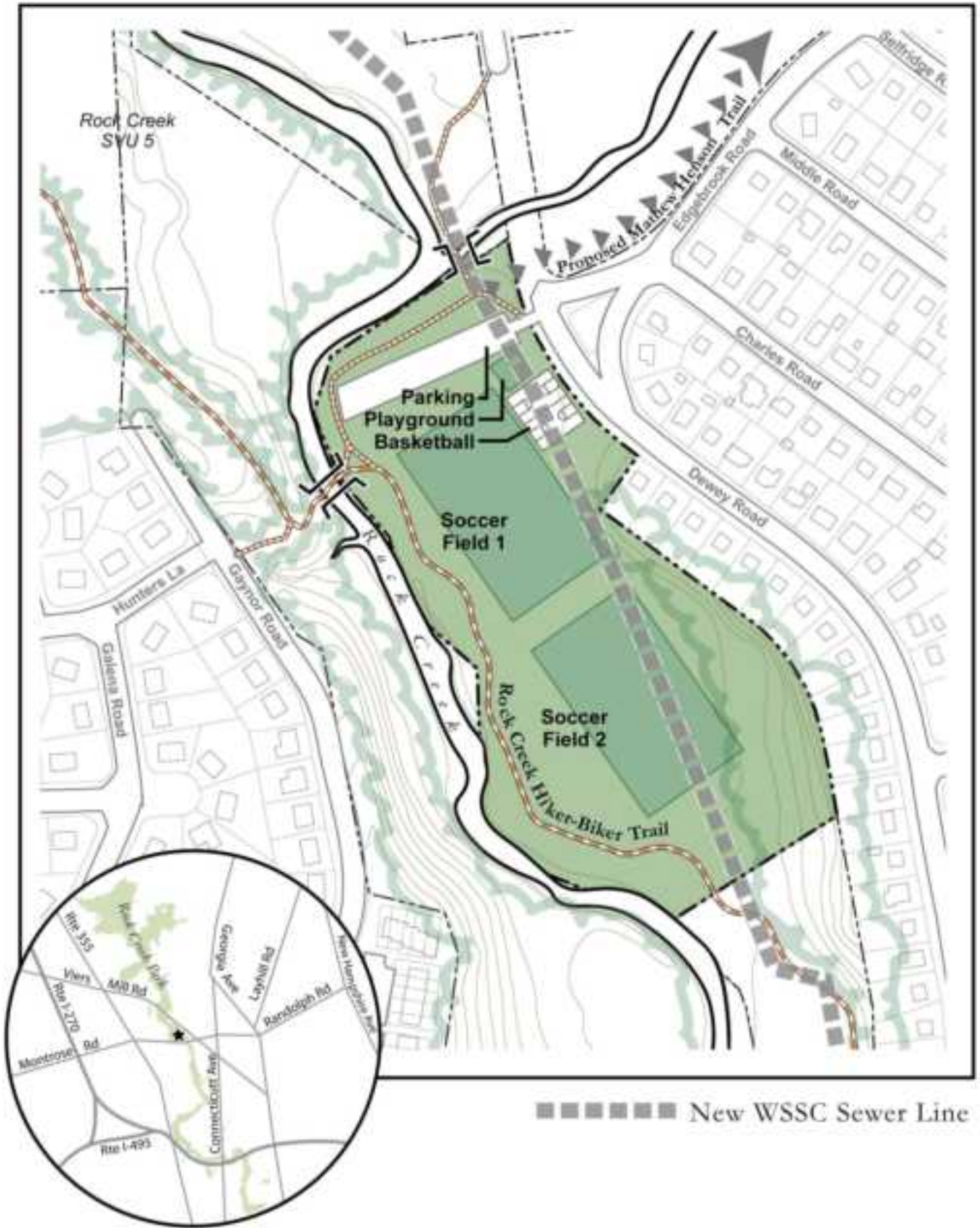
Winding Creek Local Park Renovation

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this Planning Board item is to approve a renovation plan for Winding Creek Local Park. This local park, at the corner of Dewey and Edgebrook Streets in Silver Spring, will be closed for two years beginning in November 2003 for the WSSC Rock Creek Sewer Relief Project. The sewer project is needed to allow WSSC to add sewer capacity and to replace a deteriorated, inadequate sewer line that runs through the Park. As part of the Rock Creek Sewer Relief Project through Rock Creek SVP units 4, 5, and 6, WSSC is required to reconstruct the facilities in Winding Creek Local Park in accordance with a reconstruction concept plan being developed by MNCPPC.

The approved renovation plan will be given to WSSC to engineer, permit and construct.

The Existing Winding Creek Local Park





RENOVATION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide additional parking to address existing parking overflow problem and remove existing parking lot from environmentally sensitive stream valley buffer.
- Enhance park image and identity by creating a defined park frontage through fencing, landscaping and park signage.
- Improve the playground with new updated equipment for multiple age groups of children.
- Retain two full size soccer fields and amend the turf for better playing conditions. Control over-use of fields and overcrowding of park through permits.
- Retain and relocate the double basketball courts to reduce user conflicts with playground users and use at night when park is closed.
- Provide Park information kiosks that include maps for the Rock Creek and the future Mathew Henson Trails, community bulletin boards and emergency park contact numbers. Post opportunities for volunteering in the park.
- Provide an area for a future picnic shelter and other shaded picnicking areas.
- Provide a grassed volleyball court.
- Increase accessibility to recreation facilities by providing walkways from the parking lot and neighborhood walks to the playground, volleyball court and basketball court. Connect neighborhood access trails to Rock Creek and future Mathew Henson Trails.
- Plan for a future new drinking fountain with a dog water bowl feature for the many dog walkers in the neighborhood.
- Provide needed park amenities such as portable restrooms with wooden enclosures and bicycle racks.
- Identify areas available for reforestation along portions of the stream valley buffer that will not screen the Rock Creek Trail from view.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND COSTS

Funding

The total cost for the park renovation is estimated to be \$1,394,000 (see cost estimate below). This includes \$365,000 from WSSC for engineering and construction costs, which they are liable for under the proposed MOU for the project. A CIP PDF form is being developed for Board review in February 2004 in the context of making further recommendations in response to the County Executive's Recommended CIP.

Cost Estimate

Planning, Design & Supervision	
Design	198,000
Construction Mgmt.	84,000
TOTAL	282,000
Site Improvements & Utilities	
Site Improvements	1,112,000
Utilities	0
TOTAL	1,112,000
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PROJECT TOTAL	1,394,000

Implementation strategies

This park will be partially funded through monies received from WSSC as a result of the mandatory referral conditions of approval and the MNCPPC Capital Improvements Program.

Mandatory Referral Plan Conditions of Approval require WSSC to:

- Renovate two athletic fields to Park and Planning specifications including crowning and resodding playing fields rather than seed and mulch to reduce time fields are unavailable for use.
- Construct new playground to Park and Planning specifications
- Construct new basketball court to Park and Planning specifications
- Repair and overlay existing asphalt parking lot
- Replace trash cans* and benches removed by WSSC
- By a 1997 MOU that requires WSSC to pay a permit fee to M-NCPPC, use fee to pay for any park enhancements beyond cost of standard restoration to park.
- Maintain the use of the hiker\biker trail throughout the WSSC construction project.
- This is not an all-inclusive list and may be expanded at the time of issuance of park permit.

* Trash cans will not be replaced

Schedule and Timing

The Sewer Project was begun by WSSC November 10, 2003 and the approximate completion date is June 2005. The schedule for the Park construction will be determined with WSSC in the near future. The greatest lead-time will be for acquiring permits for construction within the floodplain.

Design and Construction Coordination with WSSC - MOU

Once the Planning Board has approved the renovation plan for the park, M-NCPPC will give the plan to WSSC to hire a design and engineering consultant. The WSSC consultant will finalize the construction plans and cost estimates for M-NCPPC review and approval. The final construction plans will be submitted by WSSC for permits. WSSC will then be responsible for hiring a contractor for the construction of the park. MNCPPC will recommend qualified park contractors for the bid information to be sent to and MNCPPC will review the construction project bids and help recommend the preferred contractor for the project. MNCPPC will be present during the pre-bid and pre-construction meetings. MNCPPC will have a park construction inspector assigned to this project. After final acceptance of the park (all punch list items have been completed), MNCPPC will transfer its funding to WSSC.

Options

There remains the option for the Planning Board to have WSSC rebuild the facilities that their construction has demolished or damaged in place without any significant enhancements to the park. This would not require MNCPPC funding. Staff does not recommend this option, as there is an opportunity to resolve a number of existing problems with Winding Creek Park documented herein.

There are some aspects on the redesign that can be deferred to another time that staff can review with the Planning Board when this item is taken up.

THE PARK TODAY

Winding Creek Local Park is a 12.5-acre Local Park adjacent to Rock Creek Stream Valley Unit 5. (Vicinity Map) It is located at the intersection of Dewey Road and Edgebrook Road in Wheaton, adjacent to the Viers Mill Village Development. The park provides both active and passive recreation opportunities. The adjacent wooded stream valley park offers urban residents opportunities to observe wildlife and quietly enjoy the natural environment.



Existing Park Facilities

Existing park facilities include:

- 2 full sized soccer fields
- Double basketball court
- Playground
- 62 car parking lot
- 1 portable restroom
- Drinking fountain
- Community access trails from Dewey Road & Gaynor Road
- A portion of the Rock Creek Trail

Current Usage

The park is extremely heavily used and has an estimated annual attendance of over 25,000 people. The majority (65%) of this use is ballplayers and ballgame spectators, with nearly 900 hours of programmed games and practices reserved through the permit office in 2003. Area residents use the playground heavily and youth and young adults utilize the basketball courts. These facilities are currently adjacent to each other and cause conflicts because of the rough language used by some of the basketball players and the parents and young children on the basketball court. Much of the park is used for informal picnicking on the grass by soccer spectators. The Rock Creek Trail is also very popular and accommodates hiking, walking, bicycling, and the many dog walkers in the neighborhood. The park is closed at dark and there is no lighting. An undefined area near the stream is currently being used for pick-up volleyball, and the volleyball players bring their own nets and balls.

Summary of Winding Creek Park Site Visit

Use at Winding Creek Local Park was observed on Sunday June 29, 2003 from 1:30-2:30 pm on a sunny day with temperatures in the mid-80's. The park was heavily used (207 users), but no major problems were seen. Users appeared to be young families and a few grandparents. Every one was polite and well dressed. There was soft music playing and no alcohol or other problems were observed. There were also 3-food vendor trucks parked adjacent to the park, but they did not seem to be causing a problem. The noise and disruption when observed from the closest home (4416 Dewey Road) did not appear great.

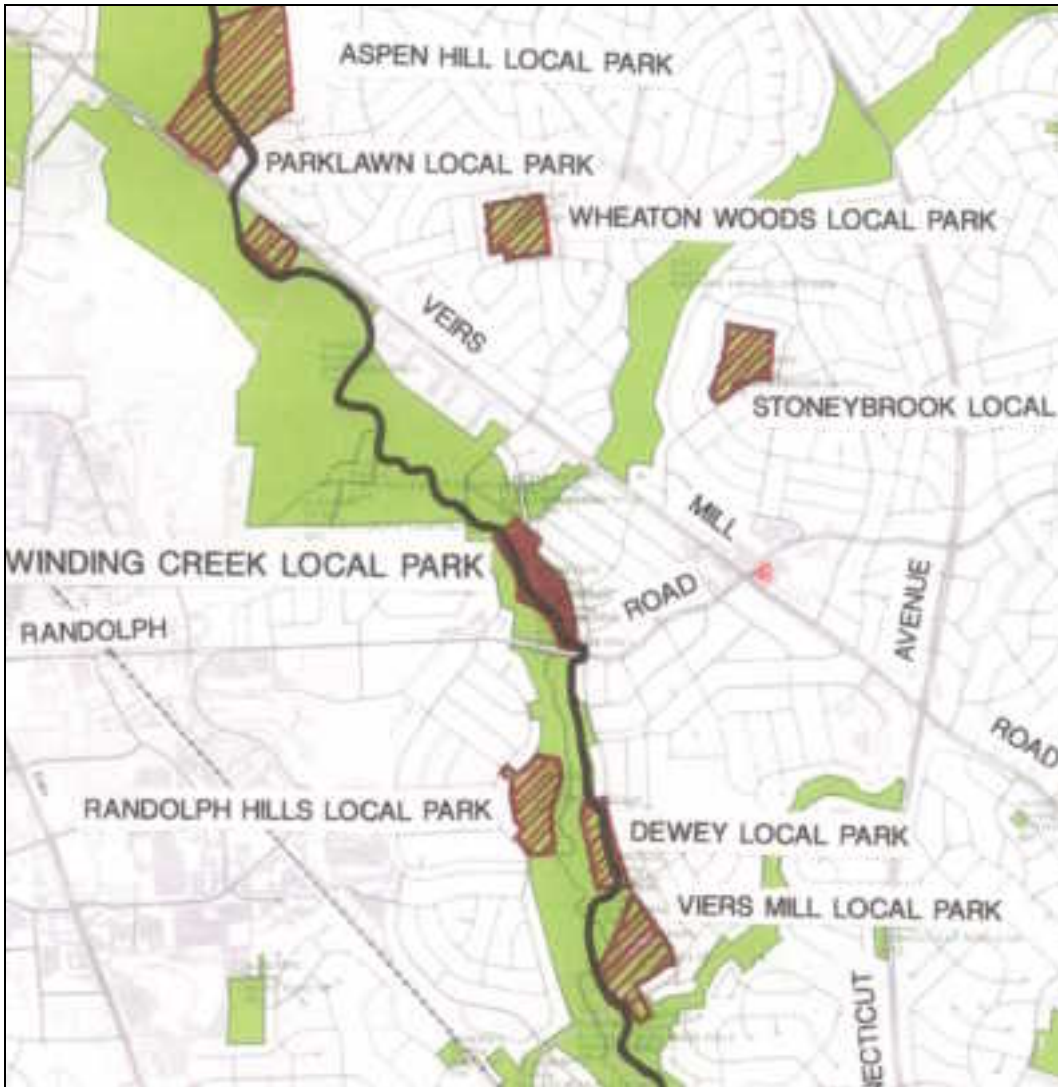
An adult soccer game and spectators were the primary use of the park at the time it was observed. The soccer game occurred on the field closest to parking lot and there were 150 spectators picnicking and watching the game under the trees adjacent to the field. There were also 25 playground users and 10 hiker biker trail users observed, however as the hiker biker trail is on edge of park, not all users were seen and counted. The total number of cars parked with only 1 field in use was 110, only 62 of which were accommodated in the parking lot; all but three had Maryland license plates. There did not appear to be any blocked driveways.

In summary, the 207 users and 110 cars observed appeared to fill the Park to capacity although only one field was in use. Everyone was well behaved and no illegal activity was observed. However, if 2 adult games had been scheduled at once, park would have been well over capacity.

NEARBY PARK AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

There will be a loss of recreational facilities for two years or more while the sewer and park projects are under construction.

MNCPPC staff and Recreation Department staff provided the community with maps of nearby parks and a list of the recreational facilities and locations of Recreational programs and facilities in the area, many of which can be walked to. There are seven other local parks within one mile of Winding Creek. The adjacent neighborhood did not voice concern over the temporary loss of the park.



Local Parks in the Winding Creek Park Area



Aspen Hill Local Park
5013 Baltic Avenue, Aspen Hill
2 Softball Field, 1 Baseball Field, 1 Soccer/Football Field, Rock Creek Trail, Parking



Dewey Local Park
11720 Dewey Road, Viers Mill
2 Playgrounds, 4 Tennis, 1 Basketball, 1 Soccer Field, Rock Creek Trail, Parking



Parklawn Local Park
13000 Viers Mill Road, Wheaton
2 Soccer Fields, Rock Creek Trail, Parking



Randolph Hills Local Park
11805 Ashley Drive, Silver Spring
1 Playground, 1 Rec Center, 2 Softball Field, 2 Tennis, Basketball, 1 Soccer/Football Field, Rock Creek Trail P



Stoneybrook Local Park
4105 Harvard Street, Wheaton
1 Playground, 1 Rec Center, 2 Softball Baseball Field,
2 Tennis, 2 Basketball, 1 Football Field , Parking



Viers Mill Local Park
4425 Garret Park Road, Veirs Mill
1 Playground, 1 Rec Center, 2 Softball Field,
1 Basketball, 1 Football Field, 1 Soccer Field,
Rock Creek Trail, Parking



Wheaton Woods Local Park
4650 Falcon Street, Wheaton
1 Playground, 2 Softball Field, 2 Tennis, 1/2 Basketball,
1 Soccer/Football Field, Community Trail, Parking

PUBLIC INPUT

Public input was received from a May 7, 2003 Public Meeting and letters. Residents immediately adjacent to the park indicated that they have serious concerns with the overuse of the park and overflow of the parking lot onto adjacent streets. They indicated that the triangle area at Edgebrook and Dewey is often used for illegally parking trailers. They requested solutions to the overflow parking problem and elimination of a soccer field to reduce users. The park police have designated the park a Hot Spot because of the large amount of users, trash, and occasional belligerent adult behavior. Some residents also requested additional facilities including covered picnic areas, volleyball courts, public restrooms, detailed trail maps, lighted basketball courts, larger updated playground, drinking fountain by soccer field #2, more benches and trashcans, additional over flow parking on Gaynor Road, an under road passage under Randolph for the trail so as not to have to cross at busy road intersection, and a dog park. (See attachments) The proposed plan includes as many of these requests as was feasible.

A second public meeting was held on Thursday January 8, 2004. The following input was received: 1) There is a need for both youth and adult soccer fields in the area. Now that the fields are closed, adult soccer teams are being sent as far away as Ridge Road and South Germantown. 2) Neighbors continue to be concerned about the overuse of the park, cars from park users overflowing into the community and problems with bad behavior, need for more/better restrooms, etc. 3) Environmental issues related to the park being in the floodplain were a concern to the Sierra Club members that attended.

Relationship To Existing Master Plans

Winding Creek Local Park is located in the Wheaton Planning Area. The 1998 Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan estimated that in the year 2010 there will be a deficit of 4 ball fields in this area. The existing playgrounds and multi-use courts in the area must be retained to serve existing needs.

KEY ISSUES

During the planning process, the key issues were identified and addressed as shown in the chart below:

Key Plan Issue	Plan Recommendations
Dealing with competing Fiscal Resource demands and Development within a Floodplain	Identify priorities in terms of environmental protection and community needs
Environmental Priorities	Plan Response
Improve storm water management	Address existing erosion and run-off problems by providing new storm water management facilities.
Enhance the stream valley buffer	Remove existing parking lot from stream valley buffer. Identify areas available for reforestation along portions of the stream valley buffer that will not screen the Rock Creek Trail from view. Notify community of volunteer opportunities to help eliminate non-native invasive from the Rock Creek stream valley forest areas.
Best Management Practices for construction within a floodplain are followed	Allow for revisions to concept plan during engineering phase to keep impact to environment and costs low.

Top Community Needs	Plan Response
Managing Public Use	
Reduce parking congestion and overflow into the neighborhood	Provide additional parking to address existing parking overflow problem
Too many people in park when adult soccer teams play on both fields	Control over-use of fields and overcrowding of park through permits
Stop park users from leaving trash, using bad language and using forest as bathroom	Educate users of the new Take Trash Away Policy for local parks with posted notices in kiosks Increase number of portable restrooms from 1 to 2.
Stop park users from shining headlights on basketball court and using at night	Retain and relocate the double basketball courts away from parking to reduce user conflicts with playground users and use at night when park is closed.
Request for Increased policing at park to control unwanted behavior	New park layout uses the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) concepts of design Police patrols have increased; residents need to call park police when they see a problem. Park Police emergency numbers will also be posted in new map kiosks
Enhancing Park Facilities	
Requests for a safer, more attractive and functional park with some new facilities	Enhance park image and identity by creating a defined park frontage through fencing, landscaping and park signage. Improve the playground with new updated equipment for multiple age groups of children. Retain two full size soccer fields and amend the turf for better playing conditions. Provide park information kiosks that include maps for the Rock Creek and the future Mathew Henson Trails, community bulletin boards and emergency park contact numbers. Provide an area for a future picnic shelter and other shaded picnicking areas as requested Provide a grassed volleyball court as requested. Increase accessibility to recreation facilities by providing walkways from the parking lot and neighborhood walks to the playground, volleyball court and basketball court. Connect neighborhood access trails to Rock Creek and future Mathew Henson Trails. Plan for a future new drinking fountain with a dog water bowl feature for the many dog walkers in the neighborhood. Provide needed park amenities such as enclosed portable restrooms and bicycle racks.

Additional Plan Considerations	
Some members of the adjacent neighborhood wanted to remove a soccer field to solve the parking problem.	There is currently a great deficit of soccer fields in the down county area and the 1998 PROS Plan states that this area will be in need of 4 additional fields by 2010. There is currently no land available to accommodate additional athletic fields elsewhere in this area.
The Community would also like the fields to be permitted only to youth and not adults because of the problems with belligerent adult behavior.	Permitting of fields only to youth would have countywide implications and will need further analysis before a recommendation can be made. Possible fines associated with trash can be enforced through the permit of the field. This requires further analysis before a recommendation can be made.
Transportation Issues	M-NCPPC staff met with McDPWT for preliminary approval to use McDPWT Road ROW for parking lot expansion. Final construction plans will need to be submitted for their final approval and easement agreement.

FOREST CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Environmental Planning staff recommends approval of this Park Plan with the following comment addressing nonconforming use within the floodplain:

- The following best management practices should be pursued to mitigate development within the floodplain:
- Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) should pursue rain gardens or other bioretention facilities for storm water water quality control during the development of Storm water Management Plans.
- Afforestation should be accomplished in cleared areas of the stream valley.

See Attached memo and form from Environmental Planning for additional details.