



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK & PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

3/31/05
MCPB

Item No: _____

March 23, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Chief, Countywide Planning Division
John E. Hench, Ph.D., PPRA Unit Supervisor, CWP Division

FROM: Lyn Coleman, Trail Planning Supervisor (301-650-4391)

**SUBJECT: STAFF DRAFT RACHEL CARSON GREENWAY TRAIL CORRIDOR
PLAN – APPROVAL TO PRINT FOR PUBLIC HEARING
(No Public Testimony Will Be Taken)**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

APPROVAL to publish for purposes of Public Hearing, tentatively scheduled in May.

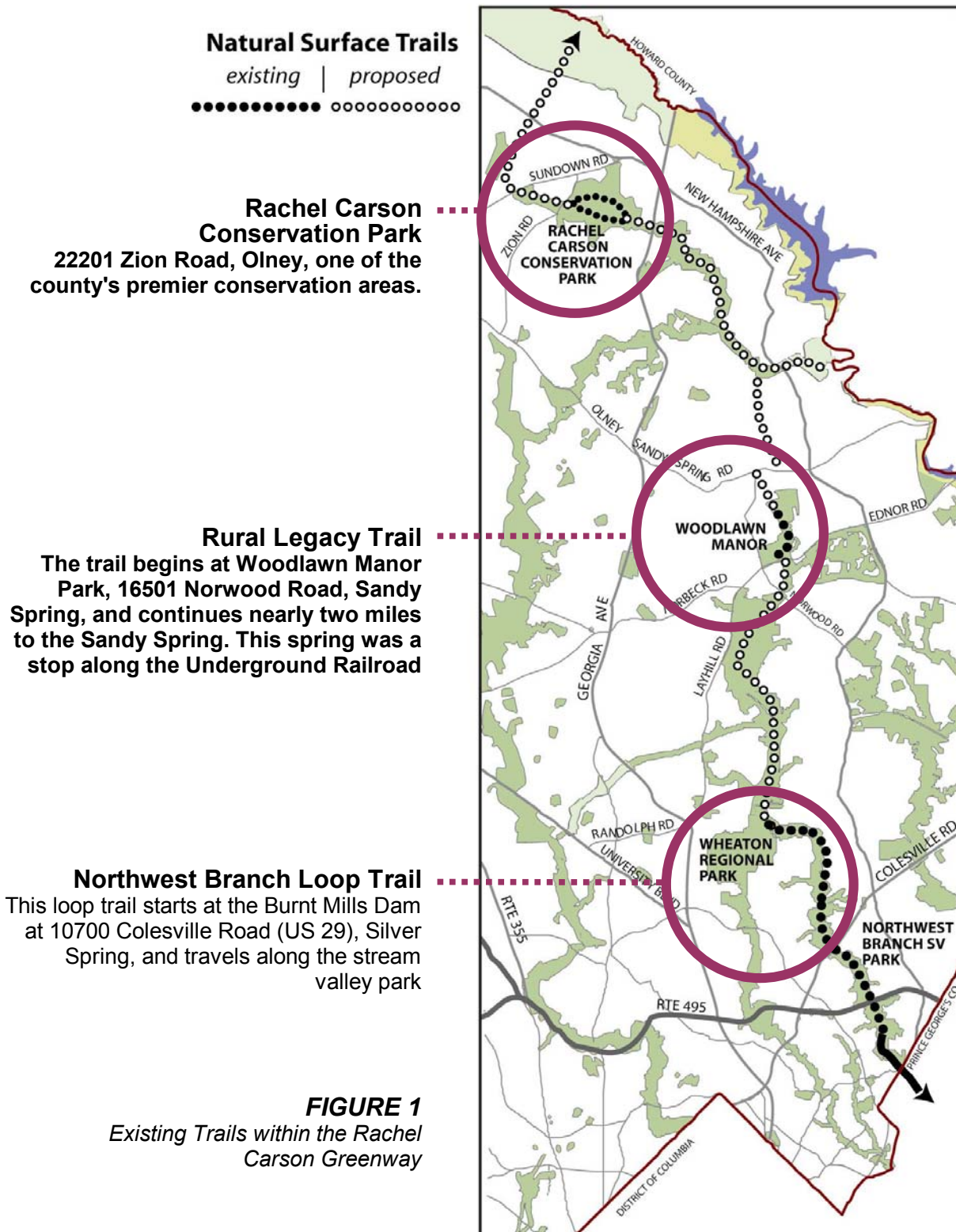
BACKGROUND

The Rachel Carson Greenway, shown in *FIGURE 1*, stretches for 25 miles from the southern boundary of Montgomery County northward to the Patuxent River State Park.

The Countywide Park Trails Plan (1998) identified the need to study this corridor in more detail. In 2003, the Planning Board included the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail Corridor Plan in the 2004-2006 Trails Work Program. In July 2004, the Planning Board approved the plan objectives, plan schedule and the public participation element of the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail Corridor Plan.

In accord with the plan schedule approved by the Planning Board, staff has since sponsored two community meetings on plan issues and opportunities (one in the southern part of the corridor, the other in the northern part). Staff has also met with the Sandy Spring Civic Association, the Board of the Sandy Spring Museum, the Neighbors of Northwest Branch and Sandy Spring Green Space. Those attending the above meetings generally expressed support for the concept of an interpretive- based 25-mile greenway.

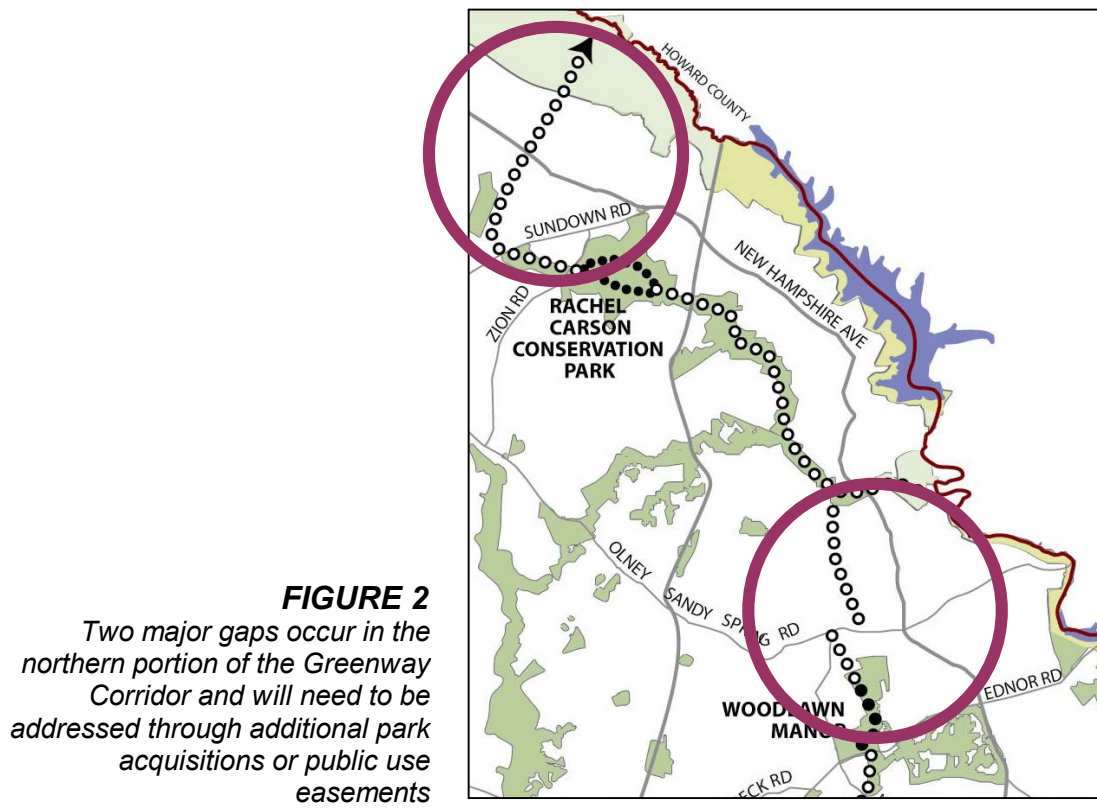
The most highly debated issue relating to the Plan thus far is where the greenway should be located in the Sandy Spring area. As described below in Plan Highlights, two different locations for the greenway are included in the Staff Draft Plan and staff is recommending th at both go forward for purposes of Public Hearing.



PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The key highlights of the Plan include:

1. The Rachel Carson Greenway is proposed an interpretive corridor for the entire 25 miles. The interpretive emphasis will be on the natural world (using Rachel Carson's *The Sense of Wonder* as a guide) and the County's history. The greenway has been divided into interpretive segments that capture key natural, historic and cultural resources. This concept is shown as *FIGURE 3*.
2. The Plan emphasizes the need to make the greenway continuous. The majority of the greenway is in public ownership as parkland but there are two areas where there is no public ownership. In these areas, either additional parkland must be acquired or public use easements need to be established (*FIGURE 2*). The Plan includes greenway options for these two "gaps", one of which is in Sandy Spring and the other is north of the Rachel Carson Conservation Park.
3. The Plan recommends a natural surface trail the length of the greenway with one key exception: the existing hiker-biker hard surface trail located in Segment 1 that connects to the Anacostia Trail system in Prince George's County.
4. In terms of implementation, the Plan recommends focusing on one segment of the greenway at a time. Determining the priority of segments would occur as part of the Planning Board's bi-annual review of the Trails Work Program.

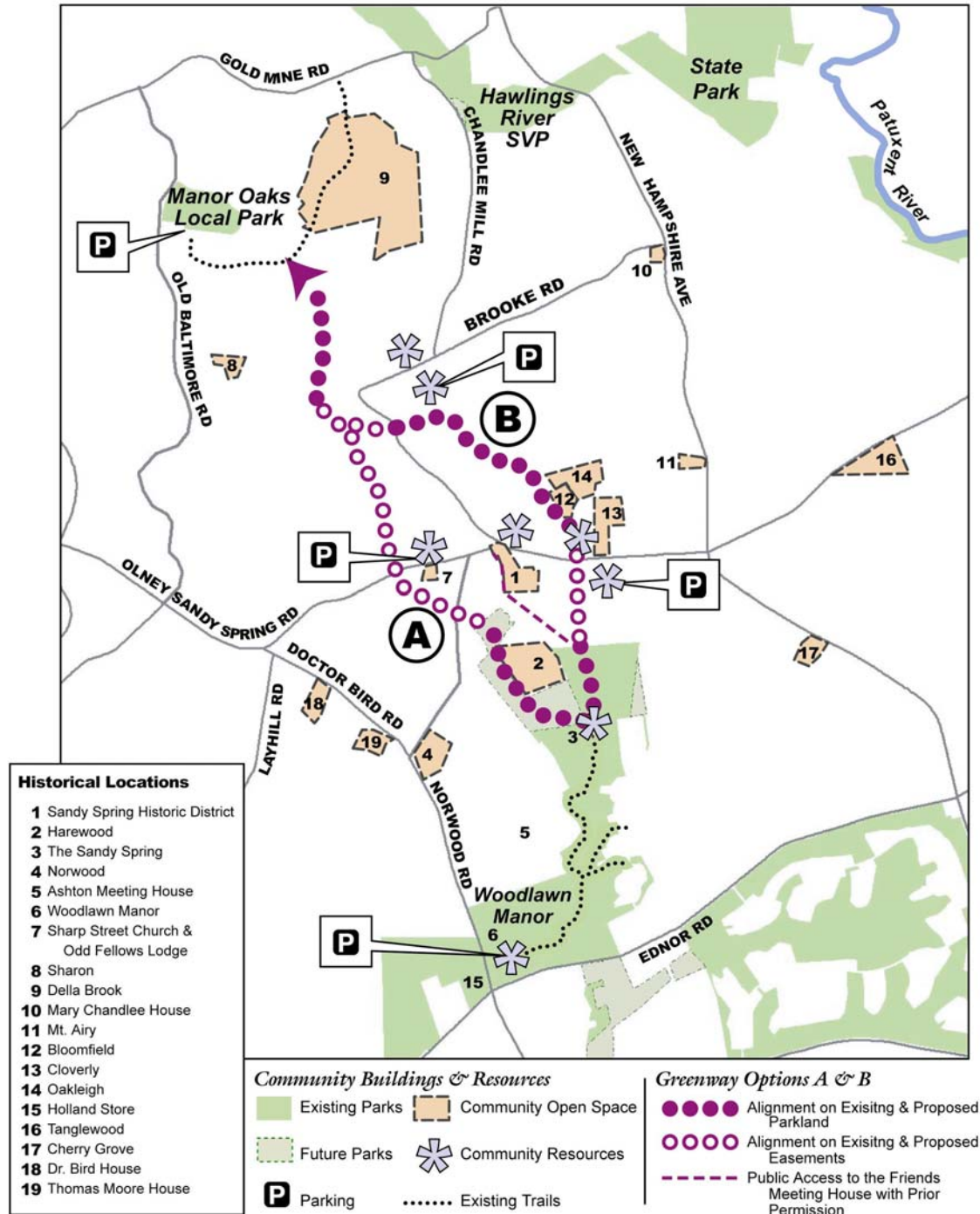


KEY PLAN ISSUE

The issue that has received the most citizen comment and debate relates to Segment 5 in Sandy Spring. Shown below in FIGURE 4, the location of the greenway is a significant community issue. The Staff Draft includes two greenway options. **Option A** reflects an alternative suggested by community members. Staff is recommending **Option B** as the preferred location of the greenway but recommends that both options be included in the Public Hearing Draft Plan. A detailed discussion of the options may be found on pages 14-18 of the Staff Draft Plan

FIGURE 4

Segment 5: Night Sky, the Underground Railroad, Quaker Traditions



Interpretive Themes Chart.

Each theme is based on a quote from *The Sense of Wonder* by Rachel Carson.

Segments	Themes	Key Interpretive elements
1: Sounds of Water	<i>Hearing can be a source of ...exquisite pleasure...Take time to listen and talk about the voices of the earth and what they mean—the majestic voice of thunder, the winds, the sound of surf or flowing streams.</i>	Hearing the different sounds of the Northwest Branch stream at different locations; enjoying the abundant native Rhododendrons; the positive effects of stream restoration projects; learning about Teddy Roosevelt’s visit to this section of the greenway.
2: Teaching Children	<i>...If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in....</i>	Explain the structure of the forest and the types of trees, highlight efforts of Commission and citizens to clean-up Anacostia River, explain about plants that grow on the rocks, talk about use of rock shelters by prehistoric people.
3: World of Little Things	<i>Some of nature’s most exquisite handiwork is on a miniature scale...with a magnifying lens... we can escape the limitations of the human size scale.</i>	Talk about wetlands and vernal pools; teach about insects, soils and plants associated with these features; the importance of wetlands to overall water quality. Create vernal pool near school along greenway.
4: Changing Seasons	<i>Even if you are a city dweller... you can still look up at the sky... you can listen to the wind... you can still feel the rain on your face... you can find some place, perhaps a park or a golf course, where you can oversee the mysterious migrations of the birds and the changing seasons...</i>	Use meadow plants to highlight changing seasons; explain importance of meadows for birds and other wildlife, how meadows are maintained in nature and by humans, why they are disappearing. Talk about meadow restoration. Attract bluebirds with bluebird nest boxes; Initiate a Bat Conservation program to help manage insects at golf courses to reduce reliance on chemicals.
5: Night Sky, the Underground Railroad, Quaker Traditions	<i>It was a clear night without a moon... we lay and looked up at the sky and the millions of stars that blazed in darkness.... You can drink in the beauty, and think and wonder at the meaning of what you see...</i>	Explain how the night sky and stars helped guide escaping slaves to freedom; identify the North Star; discuss how Native Americans interpreted the sky. Describe the type of birds and wildlife that come out at night. Identify the watershed divide between the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River and the Hawlings River. Identify any differences in terrain, flora and fauna between watersheds.
6: Contemplating Nature	<i>Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.... There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature, the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.</i>	Show how beaver can change the way a stream valley looks and functions. Talk about what happens when beaver cut down all the trees, allowing non-native species to move in. Focus on vernal pools and show amphibians and other species that depend on these unique types of wetlands. Explain history of area, point out quarry and other features that hint to past activities.

Segments	Themes	Key Interpretive elements
<p>7: A Sense of Wonder</p>	<p><i>If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years</i></p>	<p>Explain how greenways help plants and animals.</p> <p>Describe what different oak trees look like, the part they play in the life cycle of animals. Explain what happens when deer populations get too high</p> <p>Discuss natural vs. man-made pond; value and attractiveness to wildlife: mink, river otter, muskrat, beaver, great blue heron.</p> <p>Interpret remains of the head race and dam at Greenwood Mill</p>
<p>8: Watershed Protection and Agricultural Heritage</p>	<p><i>Awareness of ecological relationships is—or should be—the basis of modern conservation programs...</i></p>	<p>Feature the importance of farming to Montgomery County, explain how the county's agricultural preservation program has helped protect agricultural land, highlight how modern farming practices and environmental policies have helped address Rachel Carson's concerns about over-use of pesticides.</p>