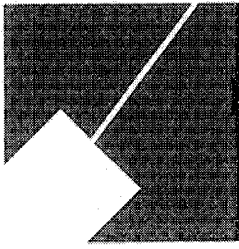


M-NCPPC



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING**

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL  
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760  
301-495-4500, www.mncppc.org

MCPB 6/16/05

Item No.   1  

June 9, 2005

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Jeff Zyontz, Chief, Countywide Planning Division (301) 495-4554

**VIA:** John E. Hench, Supervisor, PPRA Unit (301) 650-4364 *J. Hench*

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

**SUBJECT: WORK SESSION #1: PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT RACHEL CARSON  
GREENWAY TRAIL CORRIDOR PLAN: APPROVAL WITH CHANGES**

---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

APPROVE overall concept for Rachel Carson Greenway Trail Corridor as continuous greenway with interpretive objectives relating to county's history and natural environment.

APPROVE following recommendations to close gaps in greenway corridor:

- a. In the Sandy Spring area, Staff finds that both Option B (emphasis on parkland) and Option C (emphasis on sidewalks) would meet plan objectives for greenway connectivity, historic interpretation, linking community resources and supporting the Sandy Spring Target Investment Zone for Heritage Tourism. Staff prefers Option B because the greenway would be located in a natural setting that is more appropriate for a trail intended to interpret the county's natural beauty and rural heritage.

Staff has also prepared a greenway concept that includes a Sandy Spring Heritage Trail for the Board's consideration.

- b. North of Rachel Carson Conservation Park, staff recommends Options A and B continue to be studied as part of the upcoming Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan.

**PROPOSED AGENDA**

1. Overview of Trail Corridor Concepts/Plan Objectives
2. Overview of Public Hearing Testimony
3. Trail Corridor options in Sandy Spring area
4. Trail Corridor options north of Rachel Carson Conservation Park
5. Response to Other Areas of Public Hearing testimony

1. Overview of Trail Corridor Concepts/Plan Objectives (PowerPoint presentation)
2. Overview of Public Hearing Testimony

Attachment 1 is the Summary of Public Hearing Testimony. The majority of public hearing testimony focused on closing the greenway gap in the vicinity of Sandy Spring.

3. Trail Corridor Options in the Sandy Spring Area

The Public Hearing Draft Plan identifies two trail corridor options in the Sandy Spring Area. On April 26, staff presented these options at a regular meeting of the Greater Sandy Spring Green Space, Inc (GSSGS). During the discussion of these options, members of the GSSGS identified a third option, Option C.

Option C gained community support prior to the Public Hearing and was presented by staff at the beginning of the Public Hearing. All three-trail corridor options are shown as Figure 1. The Public Hearing Draft includes a chart entitled "Analysis of Trail Options in Sandy Spring Area". This chart has been updated to include Option C (see Figure 2).

### **Staff Analysis**

One of the key differences among the options relates to the character of the trail and how the trail would be maintained and interpreted. As shown in Figure 3 :

**OPTION A** relies almost exclusively on public use easements on land owned by private individuals or by homeowner's associations.

**OPTION B** proposes a greenway corridor that relies almost exclusively on existing and proposed parkland.

**OPTION C** proposes a greenway corridor that incorporates existing and proposed publicly owned and maintained sidewalks and pathways.

These differences are extremely important in terms of trail maintenance, policing, signing, trail character and interpretive opportunities along the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail.

In Option B (emphasis on parkland), the greenway and trail would be the responsibility of the Department of Park and Planning. During lengthy discussions of the most recent amendment to the Countywide Park Trails Plan, the Planning Board and staff made a commitment to assure that natural surface trails are designed to be sustainable from an environmental point of view and that park sanctioned trails will be well-signed, maintained on a regular basis and mapped for public use. In other words, park trails must meet a standard of design and care that is consistent with the stewardship and recreational objectives of the Department. This commitment can best be honored when greenway trails are managed and maintained by park employees.

Option B (park) maximizes the extent of the greenway that will eventually be in parkland and under the direct care and maintenance of the parks department. Park staff will have a clear mandate and responsibility for managing the trail, for policing the trail, for signing the trail and caring for the trail setting. When maintenance is needed after a storm event or if minor trail work is needed to address erosion or water damage, park staff will take care of the problem.

Complaints, concerns or ideas about the trail can be directed to the park and planning department for review and implementation.

### Relying on Public Use/Access Easements for Park Trail Continuity

All of the options in the Sandy Spring area rely on public use easements to some extent. Public use/public access easements are not the first choice for park trail connectivity but sometimes they are the only option.

The Rural Legacy trail located south of MD 108 is an example. The Hodges property was part of the setting of the Rural Legacy Trail. The site was also included in the Legacy Open Space Functional Plan as an important historic site that should be protected through easement. Efforts to acquire an easement over the entire property did not succeed and the property was developed in accord with the Rural Neighborhood Cluster (RNC) Zone. Rather than have a park trail in parkland continue north to MD 108, a public use easement was required at time of subdivision to allow public access to MD 108.

Public use or public access easements are useful for allowing neighborhood connectivity and neighborhood trails. Responsibility for their maintenance usually rests with the homeowner's association. This makes providing a park trail experience on a public use easement difficult if not impossible.

In Sandy Spring, all three-trail corridor options rely on public use easements but to varying degrees. Table 1 summarizes the use of easements by option.

Table 1.

<b>Analysis of Trail Options By Trail Length (in Feet)</b>			
	<i>Option A: Emphasis on Easements</i>	<i>Option B: Emphasis on Parkland</i>	<i>Option C: Emphasis on Sidewalks</i>
<b>Easements</b>			
Existing	4350	1950	1950
Proposed	3550	2700	2700
<b>Total</b>	<b>7900</b>	<b>4650</b>	<b>4650</b>
<b>Parkland</b>			
Existing	3600	2250	2250
Proposed	0	4800	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3600</b>	<b>7050</b>	<b>2250</b>
<b>Sidewalks</b>			
Existing	0	1100	400
Proposed	0	0	1400
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>1800</b>
<b>Total (feet)</b>	<b>11500</b>	<b>12800</b>	<b>8700</b>
<b>Total (miles)</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>1.65</b>

Option A (emphasis on easements) is particularly troublesome as it elevates public use easements required at time of subdivision for local use and local connectivity to park trail status. These easements, now recorded in the land records, were not planned with the Rachel Carson Greenway Corridor in mind. In the case of the Hodges property discussed above, it was known at time of subdivision that this easement was to function as a park trail connector and the alignment was located to maximize connectivity.

The public use easements that exist along Option A were required at time of subdivision to provide local access to the Rural Legacy Trail and to provide an east west path for equestrians. These easements are managed by the homeowners association. Although public use easement documents mandate the easements remain open to the public, there is NO PARK INVOLVEMENT in maintaining, policing or signing these easements.

This would mean the character appearance, maintenance and signage of a key portion of the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail Corridor would be dependent on homeowner's associations. In staff's opinion, this fact, when coupled with Option A bypassing the cultural, historic and economic center of Sandy Spring, makes Option A the least desirable of the options.

Option C , which follows existing and proposed sidewalks, would keep the maintenance, design and upkeep of the trail in the public sector but instead of the Department of Park and Planning the public agency would be the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT). Staff has successfully worked with DPWT staff to create park like trails and sidewalks and we anticipate similar collaboration in Sandy Spring. The trail experience using sidewalks would be very different from a natural surface park trail. Maintenance, signage and policing responsibilities would be clear, however,

The Rachel Carson Greenway is a significant part of the countywide greenway system. There is an opportunity with Option B in Sandy Spring to create a park like character while still providing access to the Village of Sandy Spring and linking key community and historic resources. By making the greenway part of the park system, the greenway trail will be policed, maintained, signed and managed by the Parks Department.

Option C (emphasis on sidewalks) also links key community and historic resources but does not provide a park setting for the trail. Management, maintenance and policing of the sidewalk/trail would be the responsibility of Montgomery County government. This option would not accommodate equestrian use. If this option is selected, the Board may wish to consider the designation of public use easements in the location of Option B to allow equestrians to continue north of MD 108.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff finds that both Option B (emphasis on parkland) and Option C (emphasis on sidewalks) would meet plan objectives for greenway connectivity, historic interpretation, linking community resources and supporting the Sandy Spring Target Investment Zone for Heritage Tourism. Staff prefers Option B because the greenway would be located in a natural setting that is more appropriate for a trail intended to interpret the county's natural beauty and rural heritage.

### **Including a Sandy Spring Heritage Trail in the greenway concept:**

Some of the community concerns about Option B (emphasis on parkland) are that the greenway corridor, a regional trail, passes too close to Bentley Road homes and crosses Brooke Run Tree Farm even though the nursery is expected to remain in operation for many years to come. At the same time, there is support for a trail connection between the Spring Meadow neighborhood and the Ross Boddy Center as well as for local trails that interpret the heritage of Sandy Spring.

To address these issues, staff has prepared the trail concept shown in Figure 4. This concept retains Option B (parkland) and recommends designating a Sandy Spring Heritage Trail. The idea of creating a Sandy Spring Heritage Trail separate from the Rachel Carson Greenway was raised at the Public Hearing. This concept makes Option C (sidewalks) the Rachel Carson Greenway Trail Corridor and Option B (parkland) a heritage trail. Connecting these two trails south of the Brooke Run Tree Farm avoids any conflicts with the nursery.

As shown in Figure 4, this loop trail would extend west from the Sandy Spring Museum, go along the new sidewalk west on Rt. 108 through the center of Sandy Spring Village, then up Brooke Road to the "alley of trees" on the Danshes Property. This alley of trees frames the lane that lead to the first house built in Sandy Spring, Charley Forest (now demolished), and passes by the ruins of the brick kilns, used to make the bricks for many of the local buildings. The trail would continue through forest to the Sandy Spring Museum.

The advantages of this trail concept include:

- The portion of the trail identified as the Sandy Spring Heritage Trail would be on parkland and available for park sponsored events and walks but would not carry the name of Rachel Carson Greenway Trail that seems to concern many residents because of the number of users it might attract.
- The Sandy Spring Heritage Trail would connect the Spring Meadows HOC project to the Ross Boddy Center. At such time as the nursery redevelops, a direct extension to the Ross Boddy Center could be implemented.
- The Sandy Spring Heritage Trail would avoid the Brooke Run Tree Farm. The trail would connect south of the nursery to Option C (sidewalks) and address the issue of having the trail "dead-end" at the nursery property.
- The Sandy Spring Heritage Trail could accommodate equestrians.

The disadvantages of this trail concept include:

- The Sandy Spring Heritage Trail would require the acquisition of a 6-acre property that is located between Spring Meadows HOC project and a residence along Bentley Road. This would require use of park acquisition funds. Making all this property part of the park system would allow maximum flexibility in locating a natural surface trail that minimizes visual impact on adjoining properties. The property owner is interested in pursuing this possibility.

- The greenway trail at this location is opposed by the Bentley Road Neighborhood Association because of privacy concerns and concerns about impact on farming activities. Acquiring the 6 acre property referred to above would help address these concerns because it is heavily wooded and would provide a natural buffer to nearby houses.

Staff will be reviewing this trail concept at a meeting of the Sandy Spring Civic Association on the evening of June 13. Staff will share the community response to this concept at the work session.

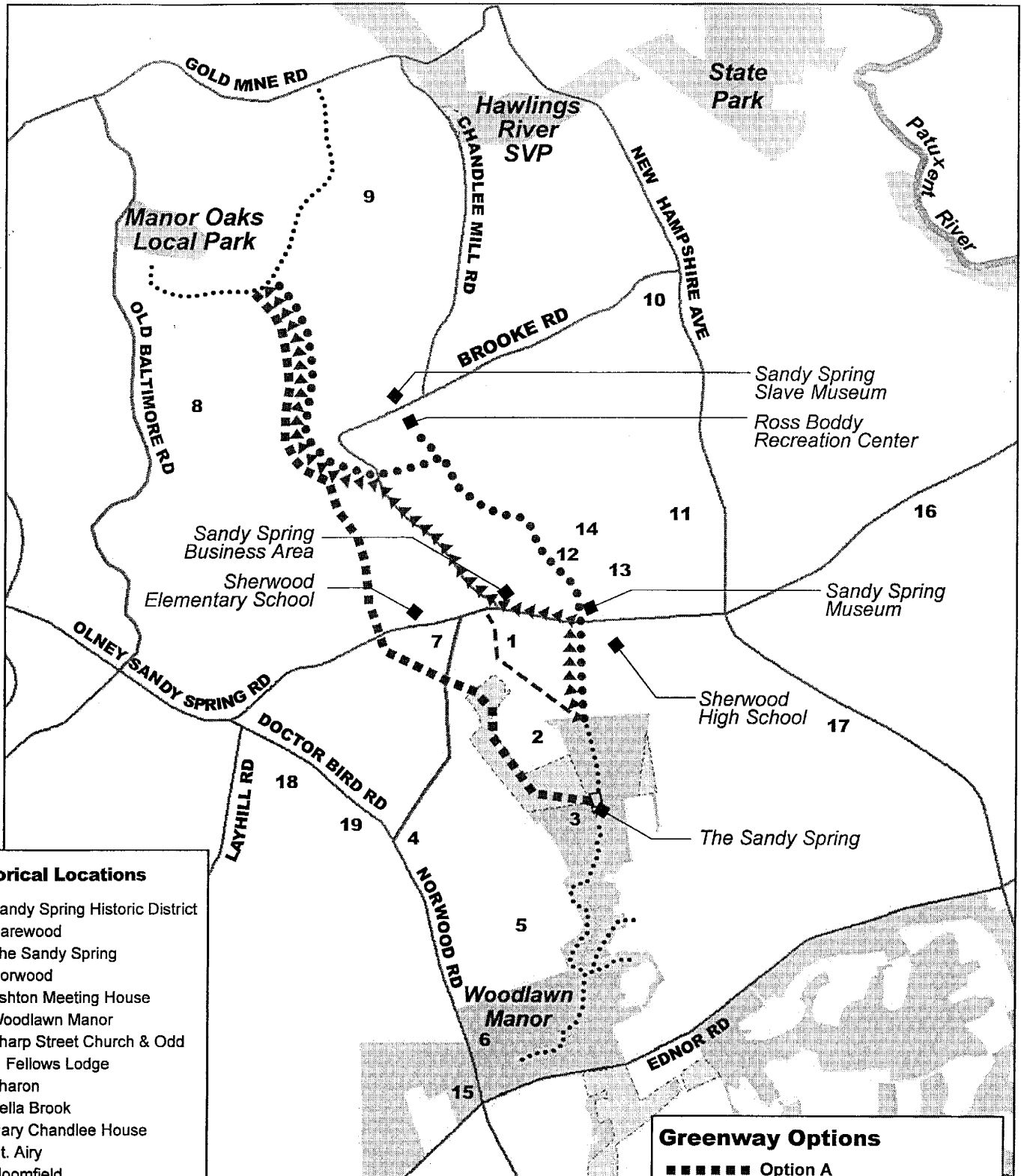
#### 4. Options for Closing Patuxent River Connection Gap

The Public Hearing Draft includes two options for closing the gap between the Rachel Carson Conservation Park and the Patuxent River (see Fig. 5).

The testimony received on this topic from the Maryland Native Plant Society and the Sierra Club support Option B because it is shorter, more direct and lessens impacts to wetlands and forest habitats. The Legacy Open Space Advisory Group recommends keeping both to provide a "loop" trail.

Staff recommends further evaluation of Option A and Option B as part of the upcoming Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan. Staff agrees Option B is better for the reasons identifies above but Option A would provide connectivity to the Rock Creek Trail Corridor in general and the Agricultural History Farm Park trail system in particular. For this reason, it would be more appropriate to look at Options A and B as part of the Rock Creek trail corridor plan process.

# Closing the Greenway Gap Near Sandy Spring



### Historical Locations

- 1 Sandy Spring Historic District
- 2 Harewood
- 3 The Sandy Spring
- 4 Norwood
- 5 Ashton Meeting House
- 6 Woodlawn Manor
- 7 Sharp Street Church & Odd Fellows Lodge
- 8 Sharon
- 9 Della Brook
- 10 Mary Chandlee House
- 11 Mt. Airy
- 12 Bloomfield
- 13 Cloverly
- 14 Oakleigh
- 15 Holland Store
- 16 Tanglewood
- 17 Cherry Grove
- 18 Dr. Bird House
- 19 Thomas Moore House

### Community Buildings & Resources

- Existing Parks
- Future Parks
- Community Resources
- Existing Trails

### Greenway Options

- Option A
- Option B (Staff Recommended Alignment)
- Option C (Greater Sandy Spring Greenspace)
- Public Access to the Friends Meeting House with Prior Permission

# UPDATED Analysis of Trail Options in Sandy Spring Area Chart

OPTION A EASEMENTS	OPTION B PARKLAND	OPTION C SIDEWALKS	STAFF COMMENTS
<b>GREENWAY DESCRIPTION</b>			
<p>The trail corridor traverses parkland, relies on public use easements in two residential subdivisions, assumes park trail dedication or public use easements on a nursery (Olds property) if and when it changes use in the future and anticipates successful negotiation of a trail easement across portions of the Brooke Grove Foundation property.</p>	<p>The trail corridor traverses parkland, relies on public easements in one residential subdivision, crosses the Sandy Spring Museum property, anticipates park trail dedication or public use easements on the Danshes property and the Stephens Farm if and when they change use in the future and anticipates successful negotiation of public use easements across portions of the Brooke Grove Foundation property.</p> <p>The northern portion of the corridor will cross future parkland on the Mess property as recommended in the Olney Master Plan.</p>	<p>The greenway option relies on an existing trail south of Md 108 (the Rural Legacy Trail). At Md 108, the greenway would follow existing and proposed sidewalks through the Sandy Spring Village Center and proceed north along Brooke Road. A sidewalk is in place in front of the Sandy Spring Fire Department; an additional length of sidewalk will be provided as part of future subdivision activity on the Danshes property. A proposed easement across the Brooke Grove Foundation property would continue the greenway northward to future proposed parkland on the eastern edge of the Mess property as recommended in the Olney Master Plan.</p>	<p>From the Public Hearing Testimony affected property owners:</p> <p>While Brooke Grove Foundation does not support any trail alignments that affect their campus, they believe that Options B and C are better than Option A.</p> <p>Brooke Run Tree Farm opposes Option B because it is their intent to continue the working nursery and showing a greenway alignment across the property is unrealistic and undesirable.</p> <p>Danshes, owners of 6-acre parcel recommended for parkland in Option B are willing to work with staff.</p>
<b>CONTINUITY</b>			
<p>Option A provides a continuous trail corridor that is 2.5 miles in length.</p>	<p>Option B provides a continuous trail corridor that is 2.7 miles in length.</p>	<p>Option C provides a continuous trail corridor that is 1.6 miles in length.</p>	<p>All options meet the plan objective of continuity. However, the quality of each greenway option varies dramatically. Option A traverses natural areas but completely avoids the historic, cultural and economic center of Sandy Spring and relies on homeowner's associations to maintain key segments of the greenway. Options B and C are far superior in terms of interpretive opportunities (a key Plan objective), historic setting, relationship to community resources and public maintenance of the greenway. The difference between Options B and C, relate to having the trail in a park setting (Option B) or having the trail be a sidewalk along Brooke Road and Maryland 108 (Option C).</p>



OPTION A EASEMENTS	OPTION B PARKLAND	OPTION C SIDEWALKS	STAFF COMMENTS
<b>Historic Resources, Interpretative Elements</b>			
<p>Only the southern portion of the Rural Legacy Underground Railroad Trail experience is included.</p> <p>Historic Sites: The Sandy Spring, Harewood, Sharp Street Church, Odd Fellows Lodge</p>	<p>Option B includes the Rural Legacy Underground Railroad Trail experience in its entirety and expands the concept to the north.</p> <p>Historic Sites: The Sandy Spring, Harewood Sandy Spring Historic District (Sandy Spring Meeting House, Old School House, Montgomery Mutual Insurance Company property, Sandy Spring Nation Bank and portions of Meeting House Road), Bloomfield Oakleigh</p> <p>Other interpretive elements: County and State Champion Ash Tree.</p>	<p>Option C is the same as Option B.</p>	<p>Options B and C are superior to Option A because both continue through the historic center of Sandy Spring.</p> <p>Just south of MD route 108, Option B and C pass through a subdivision on a public use easement. A far more attractive trail walk is along Meeting House Road through the Sandy Spring Historic District. Since Meeting House Road is a private road for a short stretch and because the Meeting House is still used for meetings and community gatherings, this trail option would only be used for park trail walks with prior permission of the Friends.</p>
<b>Parks, Open Space, Trails and Easements</b>			
<p>Option A relies on public use trail easements for over one-half of the trail corridor.</p> <p>Most of these easements were required at time of subdivision to provide trail connections between neighborhoods and to provide neighborhood access to park trails. They were not located or designed in accord with the interpretive emphasis proposed for the Rachel Carson Greenway.</p>	<p>Option B proposes a trail corridor location that can one day become a part of the county park system. The opportunity exists to create a park-like setting in keeping with the interpretive emphasis of the Rachel Carson Greenway. The proposed park trail corridor would become a reality when properties, zoned for cluster development, are submitted for development. The trail corridor could be accommodated in the open space portion of the subdivisions.</p>	<p>Option C relies on sidewalks for most of the greenway corridor. The detailed cross section for the sidewalks will determine how attractive the greenway would be. As stated in the Sandy Spring-Ashton Master Plan, paths and sidewalks should be located and landscaped to fit with the rural character in a manner typical of a rural path.</p>	<p>One of the management issues identified in the Draft Plan is how to manage the greenway trail in terms of maintenance, uniform signage and interpretation. These issues become more complicated when the greenway trail is the responsibility of homeowner's associations. This is a disadvantage of Option A.</p> <p>Option B would be located on existing and future, proposed parkland for almost two-thirds of its length.</p> <p>Option C consists of public sidewalks that would be managed by a public agency. The key drawback is the character of the greenway, as it would be less natural than a park trail.</p> <p>See the packet for more discussing of this topic.</p>

OPTION A EASEMENTS	OPTION B PARKLAND	OPTION C SIDEWALKS	STAFF COMMENTS
<p>Sherwood Elementary School</p>	<p>Sherwood High School, Sandy Spring Business Area, Sandy Spring Heritage Development Zone, Sandy Spring Museum, Ross Boddy Center, Sandy Spring Slave Museum.</p>	<p>Same as Option B</p>	<p>One of the major drawbacks of Option A is that it completely bypasses the Sandy Spring business area and the "target investment zone" identified in the Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan. Option B crosses the target investment zone and links key community resources. In Option C the greenway actually traverses through the Sandy Spring area.</p>