


**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING**

 THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL  
 PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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MCPB 9/15/05

Item No. 5

September 6, 2005

**Memorandum**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board  
**VIA:** Jeff Zyontz *JZ*, Chief, Countywide Park Planning  
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**SUBJECT:** 2005 LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS, AND RECREATION PLAN (LPPRP)  
 PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT

**Staff Recommendations**

- Approve 2005 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) as a Public Hearing Draft
- Hold public hearing on Thursday October 27, 2005

**Previous Planning Board Meeting June 23, 2005**

The Staff Draft of the 2005 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) was presented to the Montgomery County Planning Board on June 23, 2005. It was subsequently sent to the Maryland Department of Planning and the Department of Natural Resources prior to July 1, 2005 to meet the deadline for submission of the Draft Plan.

The Planning Board approved staff's request that additional outreach take place over the summer and that a Public Hearing Draft be presented in September. Comments from the Planning Board at the July meeting included a request that we edit the plan for style and continuity, and prepare a table for the State showing how the document meets the purposes of the guidelines. The Plan has been edited to improve consistency within the confines of the

required State Guidelines, and staff will continue to make editorial improvements. (If significant additional editing is requested by the Board, staff will locate resources to do this.) The future 2006 Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Strategic Plan will be the primary public park planning document and will be edited by the Technical Hearing Staff. Although the Plan purposes as defined by the State are very general, a table referencing the purposes and relevant sections of the Plan will be added to the appendix of the final Plan.

The Planning Board asked how ethnic needs were being addressed. Needs of ethnic groups are difficult to project because we do not have specific estimates of facility use by ethnic groups and the M-NCPPC demographic model does not project ethnic group population. However, in the 2006 Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Strategic Planning process, we plan additional outreach to ethnic groups to discuss their recreation preferences. Also, the State requirement to update the Plan every six years will mean that activity preferences and trends can be re-evaluated. Language has been added to the Plan LPPRP on the importance of trying to fulfill needs of ethnic groups.

The Planning Board also raised questions about the 1/3-2/3 regional park development policy, measuring demand, and possible non-traditional ways of fulfilling the recreation requirements, particularly in the down county area. These issues will be specifically addressed in the 2006 PROS Strategic Plan.

### **Plan Outreach**

The Staff Draft Plan has been placed on the Web and an e-mail site ([MCP-Parkland@MNCPPC-MC.org](mailto:MCP-Parkland@MNCPPC-MC.org)) set up to receive comments on the Plan.

A public forum was held at MRO on May 24, 2005. Major public comments emphasized the need to preserve open spaces and protect natural and cultural resources and agricultural land, and maintain existing parks (particularly returning trash cans). Recreation facilities requested ranged from dog exercise areas and indoor tennis, to rectangular ball fields for soccer and lacrosse and community recreation centers. The most requested facility was trails, with many people in favor of multi-use trails and many people against multi-use. A summary of comments from the forum has been placed on the web.

Staff has continued to have discussions with user groups over the summer regarding future needs. A ballfield workshop was held on July 29, 2005 with park region staff and ballfield league representatives to obtain comment on future needs. A ballfield needs survey was also sent to 600 league/team representatives along with information regarding field permitting. Some large ballfield user groups were also contacted individually. User groups requested that we consider an exception to the analysis of field needs by community based team areas, in the large team areas such as Olney and Damascus, separating out these growing populations. We analyzed needs by Planning Areas ( Appendix VII of the Plan). We have retained the team area service areas in the Plan, however, as these separate calculations did not change the team needs significantly.

Discussions were also held with tennis groups, dog exercise representatives and park permit staff, and an up-county forum is planned for Wednesday September 28, 2005. A summary of all public input received at meetings, public forums and through letters and e-mail will be reviewed with the Board at a future worksession along with the Public Hearing Testimony.

## **Major Policy Implications of the Plan**

The major policy implication of the Plan is the overwhelming need for rectangular fields. Nearly 70 % of the draft estimates for additional fields needed by 2020 are rectangular multipurpose fields for soccer, lacrosse, etc. There are also needs for 90' baseball fields to serve teens and adults. However, because of the decline in adult softball, some areas show an estimated surplus of multi-purpose youth baseball/adult softball fields. We will obtain additional input on the public hearing draft numbers and continue to refine these numbers until worksessions on the Plan.

This major need for rectangular fields will have a significant impact on future CIP proposals and parks built or graded by developers. We may want to revisit some plans that currently show future softball fields. Additionally, the Board may want to consider park permit policies that currently give spring priority to softball fields (there are 74 softball fields that are converted to rectangular in the fall. )

The estimated need for informal skateboard parks poses an additional policy issue that will face the Board in the future. The estimated need for skateboard facilities which is based on the 2003 State Participation Survey, includes informal, unprogrammed skate facilities that can be provided as part of local or urban parks (walls or bowls, etc.) . Few jurisdictions have these unsupervised facilities in our area, primarily because of liability concerns. However, the County recently approved an unsupervised facility adjacent to the HOC facility in Kensington.

## **Summary of Changes to the Staff Draft Plan**

Comments From Maryland Departments of Planning and Natural Resources- A letter received from these Departments indicated that they have completed their review of the 2005 LPPRP and indicated that it addressed most requirements in the guidelines. There were only two primary comments: 1) That the Plan did not include an executive summary; and 2) that additional evaluation of the Natural Resource Conservation Program was needed. They also requested a few other minor additions. All comments have been responded to in the public hearing draft with the exception of the addition of an executive summary, which will be included in the final plan. We have prepared a more extensive summary of the Plan for the public forums which the Board received in their boxes in May, and has been put on the web

## **Changes to the Plan**

The Public Hearing draft includes the following significant changes from the staff draft presented to the Board in June.

- The Plan has been edited for greater Plan consistency, as requested by the Board.
- The Plan incorporates changes requested by the State ( Attachment 1)
- Ballfield estimates have been revised based on user input and inventory revisions (attachment 2)

- Tables showing estimated 2020 needs vs Short, mid and long-term proposals have been added. (Attachment 3) This new table attempts to compare the existing inventory, demand, and estimated 2020 needs with short-term( 2005-2010), mid-term (2011-2015), and long term (after 2015) proposals. Short term proposals are those included for construction in the adopted CIP and mid-term proposals are in the adopted CIP for facility planning. Facilities to be constructed by developers of new subdivisions are also included. Long term proposals will continue to be analyzed and will also be addressed in the upcoming 2006 PROS Strategic Plan. Proposals are specifically listed in Appendix VIII of the Plan.
- Material has been added on meeting state land acquisition goals.

### **Public Hearing and Future Schedule**

It is proposed that the Montgomery County Planning Board Public hearing be held on Thursday October 27, 2005, in the evening, if possible. The record should be left open for two additional weeks. Worksessions will be held on the final Plan in early December, and it is due to the State by December 30, 2005. At the December worksessions, staff will discuss public input on the plan, resulting Plan changes, and issues that will be addressed in the 2006 PROS Strategic Plan.