



**MCPB 05/28/08**  
Item No. \_\_\_\_\_

May 22, 2009

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Mary Bradford, Director of Parks   
Michael F. Riley, Deputy Parks Director  
Doug Alexander, Acting Chief, Park Development Division

**FROM:** Michael Ma, Acting Supervisor, Project Management Section   
Ellen Masciocchi, Project Manager

**SUBJECT:** Tai Chi Court in Cabin John Regional Park  
Public-Private Partnership Project

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Approval of the proposed public-private partnership with the Wu Wei Tai Chi Club to construct a Tai Chi court near picnic shelter H at Cabin John Regional Park.

**BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this partnership project is to add a Tai Chi court to Cabin John Regional Park in memory of David Chen, who was an instructor with the Wu Wei Tai Chi Club (the Club) and taught Tai Chi in Cabin John Regional Park for eleven years. The location of the proposed court is adjacent to Picnic Shelter H in the picnic area above the miniature train station in the park (Attachment A). The court will be designed and built by the Club.

Tai Chi

According to the Club, Tai Chi is a graceful form of exercise that has existed for some 2,000 years. It is a non-competitive, self-paced system of gentle exercise and stretching. To do Tai Chi, a series of postures or movements are performed in a slow, graceful manner. Each posture flows into the next without pausing.

Many local institutions, such as hospitals and the Montgomery County Department of Recreation, and private entities offer Tai Chi classes.

### The Club

Over the past 15 years, members and students of the Club have practiced the art of Tai Chi every Saturday morning at Cabin John Regional Park. Mr. Chen suddenly passed away from brain cancer in December of 2005. Members of the club and their students, in honor of his teachings and memory, expressed an interest in developing a Tai Chi court in the park. This Saturday morning tradition brings together a diverse group that includes 30 students from the Wu Wei Club and over 50 other affiliated schools.

### Partnership Committee Review

The Tai Chi court proposal was presented to the Public-Private Partnership Committee in May of 2007. It included a petition with 688 signatures of people who supported the project, including members of 14 Tai Chi schools and groups. The Club originally proposed a site near Shelter H, where the Club's members had been practicing Tai Chi for years.

Having reviewed the proposal and visited the site, staff from Horticulture and Southern Region Divisions suggested other locations be explored within the Cabin John Regional Park. The Club's representatives and Parks staff discussed and visited a number of possible sites to consider other options. After careful evaluation of the sites and consultation with the Committee, it was determined that a relatively open area near the originally proposed site was the best location. The Public-Private Partnership Committee recommended approval of the project subject to obtaining a park construction permit and raising sufficient funds to construct the court.

### **PROPOSED COURT**

The proposal is to construct a 40-foot-diameter hard surface court with the symbols of yin and yang covering the surface of the courts. The symbols are not religious icons but instead the expression of a philosophical principle that all things involve the interplay of opposing or complimentary forces. The court will be constructed of black and white flagstone with a four-inch-thick concrete slab base. Fourteen engraved flagstone plaques will be imbedded in the surface. Benches and trees will be provided along the edge of the court.

The design was prepared by a member of the Club, who is an architect. According to the Club, this will be the second court of its kind in the United States. The other is in Houston, Texas. The initial concept was reviewed by Parks staff and revised to address their comments (Attachments B and C).





### Use of The Court

The club is not asking for exclusive use of the court. The court is to be multi-purpose and will serve other uses on a first come first served basis. The Club members feel this diverse use would be in keeping with Mr. Chen's personal philosophy.

### Community Outreach

A public meeting was held on April 28, 2009, to present the proposed project to the community. Prior to the meeting in early April, a notice was sent to residents living within a half mile radius of the park requesting their presence at the meeting to discuss the proposed Tai Chi Court. Thirteen citizens, including the Club's members, attended the meeting. Most of the comments supported the project.

### Construction Cost

The Club solicited several cost estimates from local contractors. The proposals ranged in price from \$60,000 to \$70,000. The Club has raised \$10,000 to date. The Club is planning to start their full fund raising efforts once the project is approved by the Planning Board.

### Operating Budget Impact

This project is expected to have minor operation budget impact since it is a hard surface facility for passive recreational activities. The donation may fund future

replacement cost for benches and provide extra stones for repair and replacement due to vandalism.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed Tai Chi court will be a new type of facility for the park system. It will complement existing facilities in the park and provide enhanced recreational opportunities for county residents, who want to practice Tai Chi or other passive activities in the park. Staff recommends approval of the partnership and the design of the court. If the Board approves the project, staff will provide assistance to the Club to raise addition funds and will work closely with the Club to implement the project.





# CABIN JOHN REGIONAL PROPOSED TAI CHI COURT VICINITY MAP

SCALE: 1" = 600'

- Legend**
- Park Trails**  
**STATUS, SURFACE, USAGE**
- Hard Surface Trail, Hiking/Biking
  - - - - - Hard Surface Connector, Hiking/Biking
  - - - - - Natural Surface Trail, Shared by All
  - - - - - Natural Surface Connector, Shared by All
  - \* Site

Map Compiled by  
 MC Pks/PDD using  
 MC Plan/R&T GIS

# ATTACHMENT B



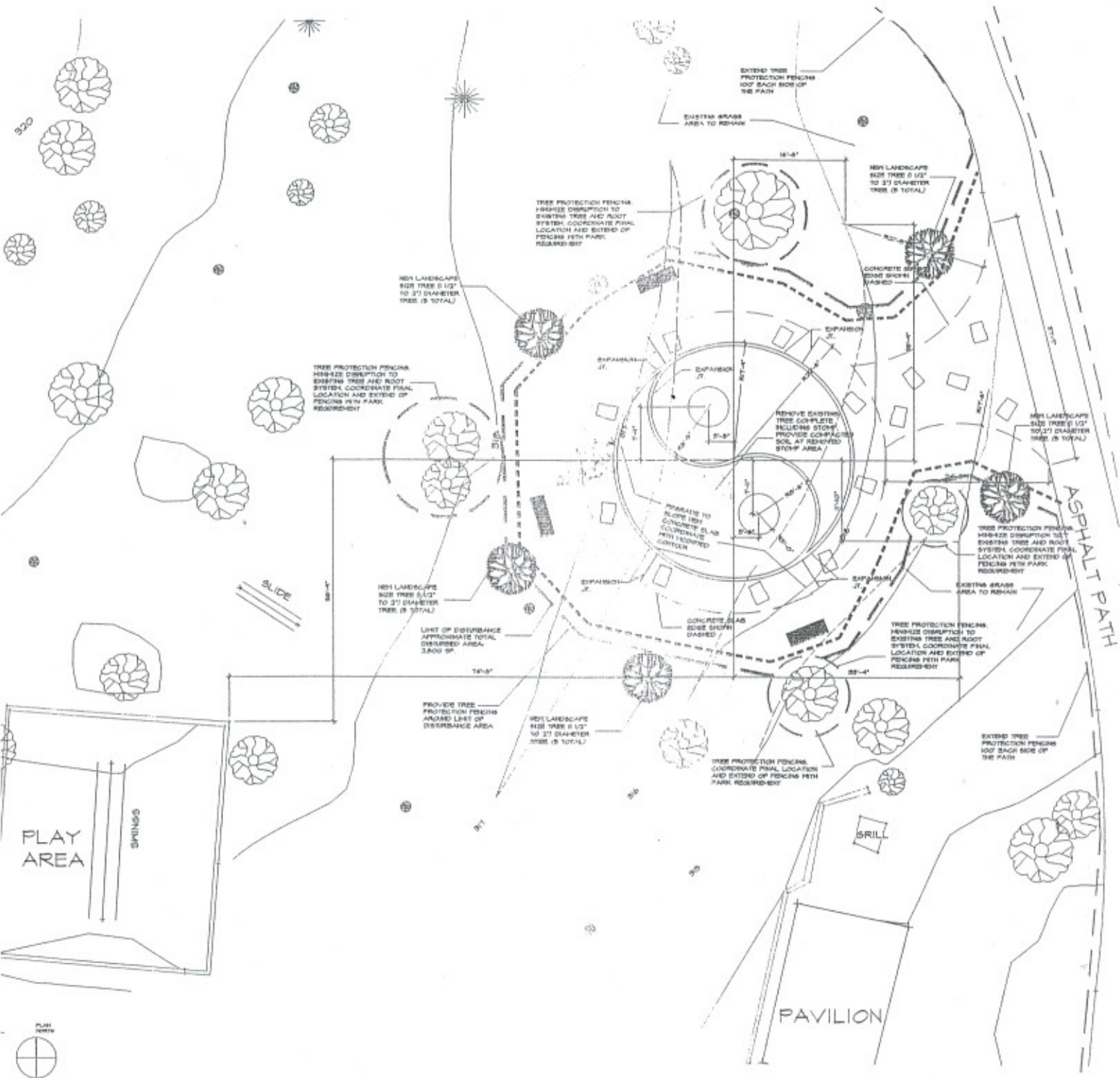
## SITE LOCATION PLAN

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

1  
A-1



# ATTACHMENT C



1 SITE PLAN AND NOTES  
A-2 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"