



MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 13, 2017

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Michael F. Riley, Director of Parks *John Hench*
Mitra Pedoeem, Deputy Director of Parks for Administration *Mitra*

FROM: John Hench, PhD, Chief, Park and Planning and Stewardship Division, PPSD
Brooke Farquhar, Supervisor, Park and Trail Planning Section, PPSD *Brooke Farquhar*
Brenda Sandberg, Legacy Open Space Program Manager, PPSD
Cristina Sasaki, Planner Coordinator, Park and Trail Planning Section, PPSD *Cristina Sasaki*

SUBJECT: Project Update for the *Energized Public Spaces: Functional Master Plan (EPS FMP) for Parks in Mixed Use & Higher Density Residential Areas*

Requested Action

Staff requests the Board’s feedback on on-going work for the *Energized Public Spaces: Functional Master Plan (EPS FMP) for Parks in Mixed Use & Higher Density Residential Areas*, including the plan’s methodology, public outreach and schedule.

Background

On December 8, 2016, the Planning Board approved the plan’s [Scope of Work](#). Major Planning Board comments included:

- Address the needs of all our populations
- Consider all public spaces including privately-owned, Recreation Department, and School facilities
- Use innovative and faster solutions to improve existing and provide new public spaces
- Include accessibility by bicycle

The Vision of the *EPS FMP* is to create a countywide parks and public space system for stronger, healthier and happier communities in our most populated areas. These spaces will encourage people of all ages and incomes to meet, play, relax, exercise, enjoy nature, interact socially and more. The major emphasis will be in outdoor spaces. However, indoor spaces will also be considered but likely play a minor role in the system. The *Vision 2030 Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation* (M-NCPPC 2010) confirmed that the highest needs are and will continue to be in areas of highest population density.

With the scarcity of developable land and the increase in density, park planning in these areas has become more critical to creating livable and healthy communities. Parks and open spaces have become the “outdoor living rooms” and de facto “backyards” for many of these new communities where they play an increasingly important role in improving public health and promoting social interaction and equity. The *EPS FMP* will be an implementation guide to meeting this challenge.

Review and approval of this functional master plan by the County Council will result in a legally robust plan that can support a wide variety of implementation tools, including dedication through the development process and the land acquisition process. As an approved functional master plan, this Plan also will provide the ability to study priority areas of the County and make new park recommendations without being tied to the land use master plan schedule.

To successfully implement the recommendations of this Plan, staff will request additional funding from variant sources for (1) land acquisition and (2) facility planning within the *Capital Improvement Program* (CIP) review process for the FY19-24 CIP, and through (3) partnership opportunities. Final design and construction funds for major park renovations and new construction of these important parks will be funded through the CIP as Facility Planning is completed, as is done for other major park projects.

Outcome of the Plan - Specific recommendations for filling the gaps in the public space network system will be the main outcome of the Plan. General areas and/or specific sites will be recommended for:

- Renovation: renovate and/or repurpose existing public spaces
- Development: develop new facilities in existing public spaces
- Acquisition: acquire/lease additional land

Methodology

This Plan will develop a methodology that can be employed systematically across the County within areas of higher population density.

Main Goal

The Plan’s main goal is to fill gaps in the public space system in the County’s areas of highest population density (the Study Area – *see Figure 1*). Gaps are identified according to:

- Walking distance of 1/2-mile (roughly 10-minutes) of a public space network,
- Number and types of experiences - active, contemplative and social gathering, per population

The Plan recognizes that parks are more than recreational amenities - they are becoming platforms for a diversity of community experiences. Montgomery Parks wants to continue to evolve the role of parks to provide the best service to the community.

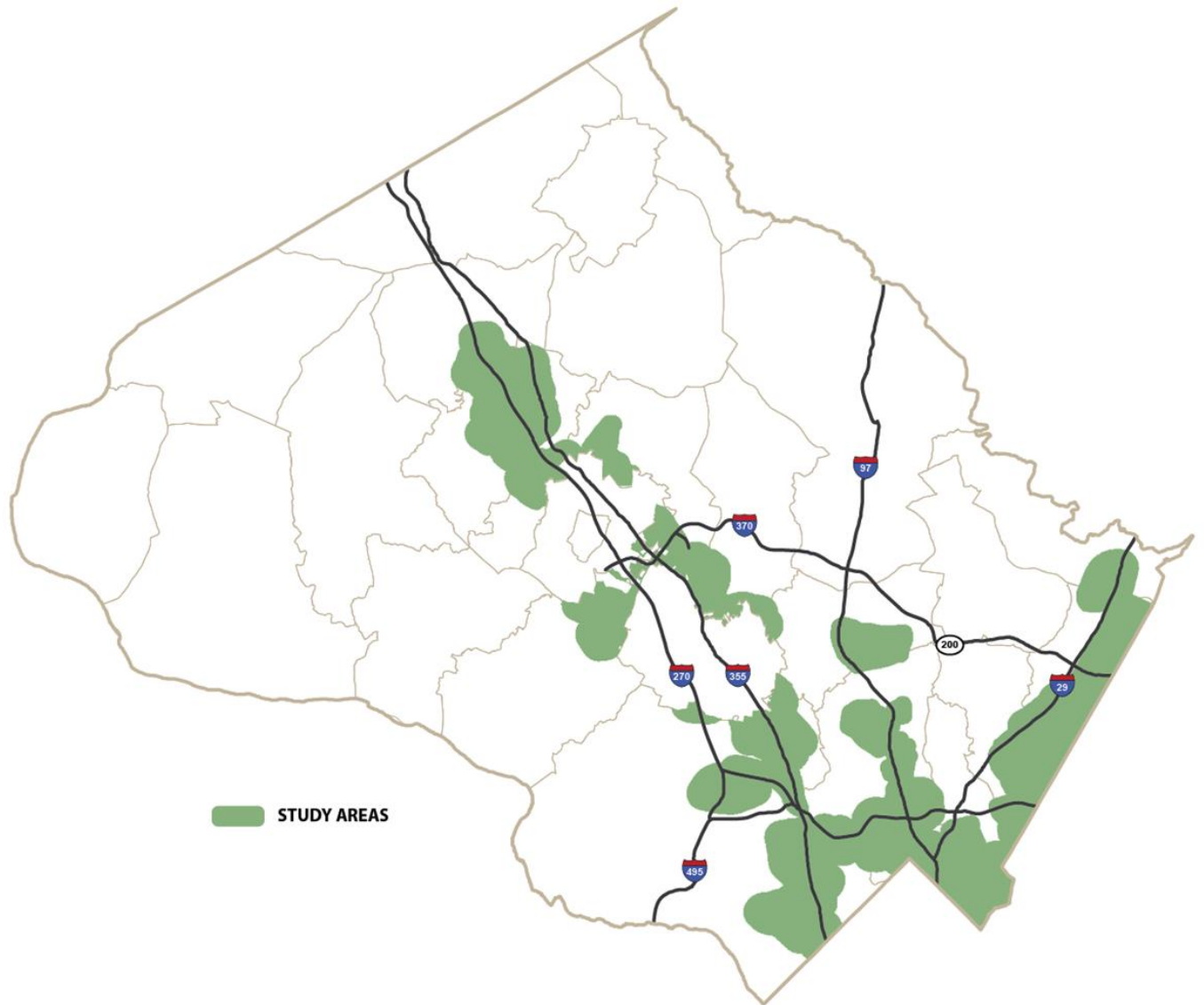
The need for more social gathering spaces in our areas of higher population has been reinforced during the Parks of the Future outreach campaign over the past six months, in particular by minority residents. The County’s minority groups are projected to steadily increase from 55 percent in 2015 to 68 percent of the population in 2040. One outcome from the draft outreach report for Parks of the Future sums up the need for gathering spaces as follows:

“Utilize parks as meeting points and vehicles for community building and gatherings. The parks should function as a place for building community through social gatherings so that people can meet each other. Work in partnership with the community, through nonprofits to accomplish more

cultural programming. Parks should be utilized as centers to promote cultural understanding and learning particularly through more ethnic programming and events.”

Community Needs Assessment Draft Report, March 2017 – Montgomery Parks, 3.3.2 Key Themes from All Focus Groups – Engage Communities

Figure 1 - EPS FMP Study Areas



How can we deliver these experiences?

The methodology will identify gaps in service and propose solutions to fill in these gaps, with a pilot area in the Silver Spring CBD. The proposed methodology will:

1. Identify the needs/gaps

- Map existing inventory of Montgomery Parks and alternate public space providers (schools, Recreation Department, developers, etc.)
- Identify population density
- Apply scoring system to existing facilities. Facilities in every park, recreation building and privately-owned public open space are scored on how they fulfill each experience category and the number of people served
- Combine population density and supply of facilities per experience: identify gaps in active, contemplative and social gathering experiences.
 - New Story Map Tool – an interactive and user-friendly to collect comments on park usage and needs by geolocating the comments into a “live” map. Users can access all comments in “real time”.
 - The major outcome of the gap analysis is a map showing the supply of experiences per population in a defined geography.
- Analyze results of surveys, mapping and community outreach (in-progress)
- Analyze previous studies, plans, and policies

2. Propose solutions to fill in gaps

- Analyze best locations for distribution of park and public spaces, according to an open space hierarchy and an urban design framework, including site accessibility by walking, biking and public transit, and park condition
- Identify list of best potential sites

3. Implement solutions

- Short- and long-term solutions according to potential opportunities of partnerships by coordination with other public agencies, private sector, non-profits, institutions, community organizations and groups
- Prioritize which parks to fund for land acquisition and facility planning.

4. Measure customer satisfaction

- Surveys, events, open-house

Public Outreach Update

Parks and Recreation of the Future

Montgomery Parks launched a multi-pronged outreach strategy in November 2016 to engage diverse communities for input about the future of parks and recreation. The initiative, titled *Parks and Recreation of the Future*, is aimed at soliciting public input to inform three separate but related park programs: the 2017 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, the Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan, and the Capital Improvement Program.

The outreach efforts targeted a vast array of audiences including, but not limited to ethnically diverse communities, senior populations and people with disabilities. A variety of channels and tactics have been employed to reach these audiences including:

- **Traditional outreach** methods such as:
 - Public and community meeting presentations to regional and citizen advisory boards,
 - Email outreach to elected officials, Home Owner and Civic Associations,
 - Posters and flyers distributed at frequented locations such as recreation centers, park facilities and libraries
- **Media outreach and advertising**
- **Social media and marketing outreach** via Facebook and Twitter posts and Facebook advertising
- **Peak Democracy**, a new online open town hall platform for people to easily submit their comments, suggestions and respond to a survey
http://www.montgomeryparks.org/projects/public-input/#peak_democracy
- **Online Mapping Survey** – new online tool introduced to map public comments on park usage and needs. Because this tool allows park users to geolocate their comments and rate other existing comments, it creates an interactive way to communicate with Parks staff and with other users.
- **Face-to-Face Outreach**- via a listening tour in which parks staff presented the details of the campaign among various organizations and groups
- **Intercept surveys** - targeted to reach underrepresented residents. The intercept surveys focus on the places they go on a daily/weekly basis: recreational facilities, grocery stores, and places of worship. The locations were selected based on County data on race and ethnicity of residents.
- A **statistically-valid survey** was mailed randomly within the County; results are back and analysis period started.
- **Key Stakeholders Focus Groups and interviews** - extensive public engagement outreach effort, focused on minority communities. Over a period of four weeks, six focus groups were conducted with an experienced facilitator, a native language interpreter, and a research analyst to record notes.

Public Meeting and Working Group

In addition to the *Parks and Recreation of the Future* outreach, the outreach for the *EPS FMP* included the following:

- **EPS FMP Public Meeting** – February 28, 2017

Parks staff held an open-house style public meeting introducing its two new online tools: online survey and comments mapping.

The use of three large touch-screen monitors created a more interactive experience with the attendees. An in-progress analysis with identification of service gaps in the pilot area was also demonstrated in this meeting.

- **EPS Working Group**

Outreach for the *EPS FMP* also include a working group with representatives of the community, government and developers and land owners. This group has been meeting monthly to discuss the plan approach and methodology and collect input from the group on the results of the in-progress analysis.

Schedule Update

2017	PLAN SCHEDULE
SPRING	
April 20	Planning Board Project Update
June 15	Planning Board - Approval of Working Draft as Public Hearing Draft
June 22	Public Hearing Process starts (30-calendar days)
SUMMER	
July 27	Public Hearing
FALL	
September 7	Planning Board Worksession and Approval of Planning Board Draft Report
October	Submit Planning Board Draft to the County Council and County Executive
TBD	Presentation to the Montgomery County Council PHED Committee

pc:

Gabriel Albornoz, Director, Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD)
 Jeffrey A. Bourne, Chief, Facilities & Capital Programs Division, MCRD
 John Nissel, Deputy Director of Parks Operations, Department of Parks
 Jim Poore, Chief, Facilities Management Division, Department of Parks
 Doug Ludwig, Chief, Northern Parks, Department of Parks
 Bill Tyler, Chief, Southern Parks, Department of Parks
 David Vismara, Chief, Horticulture Forestry and Environmental Education Division, Department of Parks
 Christy Turnbull, Chief, Enterprise Division, Department of Parks
 Tony Devaul, Chief, Park Police Division, Department of Parks
 Shuchi Vera, Chief, Management Services Division, Department of Parks
 Michael Ma, Chief, Park Development Division
 Kristi Williams, Chief, Public Affairs & Community Partnerships Division, Department of Parks
 Gwen Wright, Director, Planning Department
 Pamela Zorich, Planner Coordinator, Research and Special Projects, Planning Department