



Spring 2017 Semiannual Report

Letter from the Planning Board Chair

Celebrating 90 Years of M-NCPPC:

Since it was founded in 1927, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has achieved many influential policies in preserving farmland, creating open spaces and zoning for affordable housing. A summary of these accomplishments from Montgomery County introduces the Semiannual Report.

Four Themes:

#1 New Suburbanism

Planning Department:

Progress on Rock Spring and White Flint 2: Planning Board work sessions have been held in early 2017 for the Rock Spring Master Plan and White Flint 2 Sector Plan. Once revised, the plans will be reviewed by the County Council in summer/fall 2017

Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan: Launched in July 2016, this plan seeks ways of creating a cohesive, walkable neighborhood near the Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Station area and Strathmore Music Center. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is redeveloping the Metro station parking lot and the plan will explore ways of connecting this site to surrounding uses and new public spaces within the area.

Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan: Introduced in February 2017 at a community meeting, this plan will provide recommendations to guide future land uses along a four-mile stretch of Veirs Mill Road from Wheaton to Rockville. The new corridor plan boundaries roughly correspond to a ¼-mile area around each of the bus rapid transit stations identified in the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan.

Bethesda Pedestrian/Bicycle Meeting with Councilmember Hans Riemer: In January 2017, bicycle and pedestrian improvements recommended in the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan were discussed at a community forum co-sponsored by the Planning Department and Councilmember Hans Riemer. The County Council is continuing its review of the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan during spring 2017.

Bicycle Master Plan: The award-winning Bicycle Stress Map is a digital document showing stress levels on county roads. This cutting-edge methodology is being used to develop the Bicycle Master Plan.

Artomatic/Placemaking Presentation: Public art and placemaking were the focus of several events sponsored by the Planning Department in late 2016. The Department was one of the sponsors of Artomatic, the arts festival held in November 2016 at Park Potomac. The event transformed empty office spaces into vibrant displays for discovering new art and artists. In December 2016, Seattle-based designer Paula Rees drew a huge crowd to her public presentation on mixed-use developments that have realized positive economic outcomes due to dynamic streetscapes, vibrant retail and memorable public art.

Department of Parks:

Urban Parks: New ways of activating parks are bringing new amenities and programming to where people live. In addition to programming, we are focused on providing vibrant urban parks in areas of high population density in all area master plans and in our Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan.

Trails: Trails rank among our most popular and highly used assets in the parks for both recreation and transportation. Efforts to improve and expand both the natural and hard surface trail network will be highlighted.

#2 Engaging Diverse Communities, Meeting Diverse Needs

Planning Department:

Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan: Diversity outreach will be part of this plan to engage residents in the area from different ethnic backgrounds. Potential programs include translation and interpretation services, community partnerships, media outreach, events geared to specific audiences and collaboration with local religious institutions.

ADA Compliance: In compliance with United States Department of Justice regulations, the Planning Department held mandatory training sessions in October and December 2016 to familiarize staff with the full extent of the Americans with Disability Act. In addition, the Commission has completed a major upgrade of all of our websites to assure ADA compliance.

Bicycle Master Plan Photo Contest: In September and October 2016, the Planning Department held the bike photo contest to engage the public and chose winning images for the Bicycle Master Plan and other planning documents.

Department of Parks:

Parks and Recreation of the Future: The Department of Parks is consolidating public outreach campaigns for the Capital Improvements Program, the update of the Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, and the Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan into a single program. The consolidated outreach strategy shares information gathered from minority communities using a multi-faceted, multi-lingual approach.

Facility and Program Access: Our accomplishments include ensuring access for all and ADA compliance in our parks.

Volunteer Efforts: Statistics on park and stream cleanups, trail work will be presented.

Athletic Fields: Engaging all users of our fields is a challenge. Our new service, rainoutline.com, sends texts and emails to any participant about a specific field. If it rains and the field is closed, the parents, team coaches and players can be notified in an instant.

#3 Strengthening Economic Competitiveness by Creating Great Places

Planning Department:

Winter Speakers Series: In January, February and March 2017, three presentations celebrated 90 years of planning achievements since the M-NCPPC was founded in 1927. Speakers presented strategies for the future that build on past accomplishments in preserving farmland, creating parks and open spaces, and zoning for affordable housing.

Research: Rental Housing and Retail Trends Studies: The Rental Housing Study, due to be completed in 2017, reveals the rental market supply is short about 20,000 units for households earning less than 30 percent of area median income. This information will help future planning efforts as planners seek to ensure that the housing stock is meeting demand in the county. The ongoing Retail Trends Study, due to be completed in late 2017, is examining national and regional trends affecting shopping environments, such as the growing use of e-commerce, will propose recommendations for future plans involving retail.

Notable Regulatory Cases: Marriott International announced its new corporate headquarters will be built north of the Bethesda Metro Station between Wisconsin and Woodmont Avenues. This regulatory case will be reviewed after the County Council's vote on the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan in spring 2017. Other regulatory cases to be highlighted are the Apex Building in Bethesda, Elizabeth House and new United Therapeutics building in Silver Spring, and Brownstones at Chevy Chase Lake, a project undertaken by EYA in partnership with the Housing Opportunities Commission.

Regulatory Statistics: Chart of recent statistics for preliminary and site plans, and record plat reviews will be included.

Department of Parks:

Athletic Fields: Our multifaceted effort to improve the quality of park and school athletic fields includes an app, referred to as "the collector," that assembles data on field conditions in Montgomery County. This app allows us to quickly analyze the effect of maintenance and renovation efforts on field performance. The data from the collector helps us to determine and prioritize needed improvements to fields.

Visitation/Revenue: Facility visitation numbers, enterprise revenue information will be supplied.

New Parks and Parkland: Newly developed parks, renovated parks and parkland acquisition will be presented.

#4 Achievements and Other Projects

Planning Department:

Master Plan Reality Check: The Master Plan Reality Check aims to gauge how the goals of past plans have been carried out and evaluate why expected outcomes were or were not met. In February, the Research and Special Projects Division presented analyses of the 1997 Fairland Master Plan and 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan to the Planning Board. These studies follow the study of the 1989 Germantown Master Plan. Consolidated findings across all three plans will be presented in spring 2017.

Social Media Graphic: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media outlets are helping to engage community members who do not typically participate in the planning process.

Awards: The American Planning Association (APA) honored the Planning Department's Bicycle Stress Map with the Outstanding Tool Award from its National Capital Area Chapter. Other APA awards will be announced in spring 2017.

Department of Parks:

Rules and Regulations Update: New rules and park directives will roll out this fall.

New National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit: Requirements of new permit and water quality efforts will be highlighted.