

APPENDIX 19: PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Park Planning and Stewardship, Department of Parks, 2008

Public parkland, open space and pathways play an important role in the well-being of a community. In urban areas, parkland enhances citizens' quality of life by providing visual relief from the built environment, a sense of place and identity, an opportunity to connect with nature, and space to gather, play and celebrate community life. In addition, open space contributes to the natural environment by providing wildlife habitat, improving air quality, and preserving water quality.

Master plans in future urbanizing areas, like the Germantown Employment Area Sector Plan, refine and customize parks and private open spaces to reflect the particular needs of a community. They also help implement land use planning goals and objectives established in the Countywide Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS) for Montgomery County which gives guidance on the countywide pattern of parkland and recreation needs. The park and trail related recommendations in this document will update the 2005 PROS Plan.

Key Park Planning Issues

The existing pattern of parks in Germantown and the surrounding area reflects the 1989 Master

Plan's suburban land use proposals for Germantown. New visions for the study area include a more compact and walkable environment within each of several distinct mixed-use neighborhoods that are clustered around the transit stations of the Corridor Cities Transitway. The existing patterns and proposals for parks need to be reevaluated to support this new vision.

The key park planning issues that are addressed in this plan are highlighted below:

1. **Providing adequate urban parks and open space in the areas of highest density and near transit stations.** Recreation proposals in this plan reflect increased density in the proposed mixed-use "urban villages" around transit stations, and the changing land use patterns and population forecasts.
2. **Creating a cohesive, usable, pattern of open space by utilizing public amenity space as well as parkland.** The new plan considers a series of public open spaces near transit and mixed use centers. Not all open space can or should be publicly owned and managed parkland. Public amenity spaces in new developments

will provide a great deal of recreation and open space in Germantown.

3. **Assuring active and nature oriented recreation opportunities are available to existing and future residents of the Germantown area.** The ability of parks, both within the Sector Plan area and also in the greater Germantown area, to meet the needs in the area have been assessed in light of potential increasing density.
4. **Assuring connectivity between urban centers, parks, community facilities, and local and regional bikeways.** Appendices 16 and 17, Bikeways and Park Trail Connections, show these connections in detail.
5. **Reflecting new park planning emphasis on historical and cultural interpretation and outreach.** This information is in Appendix 11, Cultural Resources.

Plan Recommendations to Address Key Planning Issues

The following planning recommendations will address key issues and implement the Urban Open Spaces and Trails Concept (Figure 1).

1. Provide urban parks and open spaces in high density areas and near transit Stations.

The Germantown Employment Area Sector Plan supports smart growth by proposing high density, mixed uses near transit areas. Public urban amenity open spaces serve high-activity areas. Suitable locations include transit station areas, large employment centers, commercial areas, and high density residential areas. They can provide landscaped sitting areas, walkways, and flexible active recreational opportunities. Urban amenity open spaces adjacent to large employment centers provide a place for workers to eat lunch, read, socialize, and relax. In addition, they provide the perfect opportunity for cultural resource interpretation of a more progressive nature, such as public art.

The Urban Open Spaces and Trails concept in this Plan provides adequate open spaces and urban parks in the areas of highest density in that it:

- reflects the need for more parks and open space in the core area;

- recognizes that urban open spaces are a critical feature in higher density neighborhoods; and
- promotes the vitality of the centers by providing spaces for the meeting of residents and employees.

In order to assure that new mixed use areas are livable areas with open spaces and recreation, the Plan recommends specifically:

For the Town Center:

Create a series of public open spaces, linked by a promenade, a linear pedestrian system along Century Boulevard, the Town Center's "Main Street." The locations of these spaces would help to enliven and complement the retail and entertainment district of the Town Center, and include:

- The Town Commons: A civic space at the heart of Germantown with flexible seating in front of BlackRock Center for the Arts. This space is currently owned by the County and maintained by DOT.
- Town Center Urban Park: A strolling and reflective park, located behind the library. This park has already been approved as a facility plan.
- A Family-Oriented Active Play Park: An active park with places to run, climb, play, and relax, near the Upcountry Regional Services Center on the M & T Bank site.

- An Entertainment District Meeting Place: A plaza with landscaping and seating across the street from the cinemas, next to the police station.

For Each Mixed Use, Transit-Served Neighborhood:

- A Meeting Place: a space to wait for transit or meet people, near each transit stop.
- A Family Oriented Active Play Park: a flexible open space with places to run, climb, play, and relax.

Urban open spaces tend to be more expensive to build, manage, and maintain than suburban parks. To develop, manage, and maintain these urban open space areas in an attractive, usable manner without impact on other public facilities, it will be important to explore funding mechanisms such as a maintenance district.

2. Provide a cohesive, usable, pattern of open space, by utilizing public amenity space as well as parkland.

Recreation and open space needs in Germantown will be met by a combination of public parks and private open spaces. The role of public parks in this recommendation will be explored as part of the implementation process. Depending on their scale and function, "neighborhood green" areas may best be provided and managed by the private sector. Park trails will be integrated into the

overall pedestrian circulation concept to enhance connectivity.

Policy Guidance for Urban Open Space

Open Space in Urban Environments: Parks for Tomorrow (1998) indicates that urban residential areas such as Germantown need several types of recreation facilities including hiker/biker paths and community connectors, neighborhood recreation for new residential areas, and urban recreation and open space for existing and proposed businesses and mixed use development.

Planning and Design

This plan's recommendations recognize that urban areas present distinct challenges and opportunities to provide park and recreation resources and strive to incorporate and create those resources with redevelopment. The location, size, and type of open spaces appropriate to an urban setting are unique. As shown on the Urban Open Space and Trails Concept (Figure 1), this plan recommends a series of open spaces at a smaller scale than is typical of less densely populated areas, provided through a combination of public and private efforts.

Both residential and employment redevelopment projects should provide a mixture of recreational facilities, open spaces, and trail connections that

shape the public realm and serve employees and residents.

Consideration should be given to the following guidelines in location and development of urban park and amenity open spaces:

- a. They should be within five to ten minutes of walking time for users.
- b. They should include sitting areas, walkways, and landscaping.
- c. Playground equipment and other small-scale active recreation facilities, such as multi-purpose courts, should be considered in areas serving a significant number of children.
- d. Special consideration should be given to the needs of the elderly and the handicapped.
- e. Urban amenity open spaces located on the periphery of high-intensity non-residential areas should include facilities to serve nearby residents.
- f. Design should provide crime prevention through environmental design by maximizing visibility and natural surveillance.
- g. Amenity open spaces should be of a sufficient size to support appropriate use by residents, workers and the public.
- h. Consideration should be given to the appropriate amount of funding necessary to support both the initial cost of the development and the long-term maintenance of the amenity space. In commercial and mixed use developments, as businesses are

renovated or new light industry emerges, open spaces should be added to supplement public parks. Landscaping, seating areas, and public art can improve the area's appearance and improve the working environment.

- i. Environmental function should be designed into park facilities, such as fountains with storm water functions, or that mask noise.
- j. In residential developments, a key to providing adequate, close-to-home recreation is ensuring that opportunities are incorporated into plans for new development, which should provide private recreation areas for all age groups, as appropriate. Private development should include:
 - level grass areas for leisure and informal play to serve people of all ages
 - adult recreation areas
 - walking and bicycling paths.
 - playgrounds for young children
 - multi-use courts for children, teens, and young adults

In high-rise housing and transit station areas indoor recreation areas will be essential. Project development should explore innovative approaches to providing these facilities, including rooftops and indoor facilities such as playgrounds and gyms.

3. Assure recreation needs, both active and nature oriented, are met for future residents of the Germantown area.

It is critical for master plans to address the active and passive recreational needs of the area and determine whether there are any available and appropriate sites for parkland acquisition to meet long range future needs. Although new urban parks and open spaces are recommended near transit stations, most opportunities for larger scale active and nature-oriented recreation will be met in the greater Germantown area, beyond the study area.

Existing Parks

The Germantown Planning Area has nearly 2,000 acres of parkland, which includes approximately 300 acres of local parkland and around 1,700 in Conservation, Stream Valley, Regional and Recreational Parks. (See Table 1) This parkland forms a greenbelt around Germantown, providing residents with easy access to parkland. Black Hill Regional Park provides water oriented recreation and picnic/playground facilities, Ridge Road

Recreational Park has athletic fields, in-line hockey and picnicking, and South Germantown Recreational Park has many active recreation facilities including a soccer complex, an adventure playground, splash park, heart smart trail, and

picnicking. These parks will continue to serve a large population area because of their unique facilities.

In the last 10 years the Parks Department has developed six new local parks that have provided nine new fields, seven tennis courts, seven new playgrounds, and five basketball courts. The Recreation Department has opened a Germantown Recreation Center adjacent to Kingsview Middle School and a world class aquatic facility at South Germantown Recreational Park.

Parks and Recreation Needs

One purpose of a master plan update is to assess whether the existing recreational facilities are adequate and whether new resources should be provided for existing and future users. The PROS Plan projects recreational needs by planning and community based team area, and specific needs for sub-areas such as the study area are not available. According to the 2005 PROS Plan the Planning Area will need an additional six playgrounds, but needs for tennis and basketball courts can be met by existing facilities at parks and schools. In terms of new fields, the entire I-270 Corridor will need 33 additional fields, many of which will be provided by parks and schools in the rapidly growing Clarksburg Area.

Parks and Recreation Opportunities

- **Undeveloped Parkland:** There are several undeveloped local parks in the Germantown Area that should be used to meet the needs of future residents of both the Transit Study area and the Germantown Planning Area. These include: Kingsview and Seneca Crossing. Additionally, the Hondros property which is part of South Germantown Recreational Park may be used to provide future recreation facilities. Specific recommendations for these parks are found in Table 2.
- **Additional Facilities in Existing Parks:** Opportunities to provide recreation facilities include a proposal for a large public/private indoor tennis- racquet ball facility in South Germantown Recreational Park.
- **Private Recreation Facilities:** As residential or mixed use neighborhoods are built, their required private recreation facilities will be developed to help meet recreation needs in new residential communities.

TABLE 1: EXISTING PARKLAND IN THE GERMANTOWN AREA

Inventory of all Facilities & Parkland Owned, Leased and/or Maintained by M-NCPPC

Park Code	Park Status	Park Name	Acreage	Play-ground	Soft Ball Field	Baseball Field	Basketball/ Multi-Use	Lighted Basketball Court	Tennis Court	Football Soccer Overlay	Football Soccer Field	Picnic Shelters	Open Shelter	Rest-room
URBAN PARKS														
A25	D	GERMANTOWN SQUARE URBAN PARK	0.7684											
A28	U	GERMANTOWN TOWN COMMONS URBAN PARK	0.4602											
Subtotal			1.2286											
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS														
B17	D	FOX CHAPEL NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	15.696	1	1				2	1			1	6
C33	U	GUNNER'S VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION AREA	46.8461											
C15	U	MIDDLEBROOK HILL NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION AREA	11.5435											
Subtotal			74.0856	1	1				2	1			1	6
LOCAL PARKS														
E64	D	CEDAR CREEK LOCAL PARK	10.1	1	1						1			1
D27	D	CLEARSPRING LOCAL PARK	28.9823	1	1		2				1		1	
E71	D	FOUNTAIN HILLS LOCAL PARK	7.3774	1	1		1		2		1			
D45	U	GERMANTOWN EAST LOCAL PARK	8.0954											
D52	D	GUNNER'S BRANCH LOCAL PARK	65.4044	1	1		1		2	1			1	1
D53	D	GUNNER'S LAKE LOCAL PARK	8.9398	1							2	1		1
E68	P	HOYLES MILL LOCAL PARK	16.09											
E69	P	KINGS CROSSING LOCAL PARK	10.0072											
D83	U	KINGSVIEW LOCAL PARK	8.0001											
D46	D	LEAMAN LOCAL PARK	8	1					2		2			1
D91	D	PLUMGAR LOCAL PARK	8.48	1	1			3		1			1	
E02	D	SOUTH GUNNER'S BRANCH LOCAL PARK	14.9927	1			1		2		2			1
D73	D	WARING STATION LOCAL PARK	16.457	1			1				1			1
E61	D	WATERS LANDING LOCAL PARK	11.6874	1	1		1		2		1	1		1
Subtotal			222.6137	10	6		7	3	10	2	11	2	3	7
STREAM VALLEYS														
P78	U	GREAT SENECA STREAM VALLEY UNIT #1	436.6804											
P79	U	GREAT SENECA STREAM VALLEY UNIT #2	392.2122											
Subtotal			828.893											

TABLE 1 (continued): EXISTING PARKLAND IN THE GERMANTOWN AREA

Inventory of all Facilities & Parkland Owned, Leased and/or Maintained by M-NCPPC

Park Code	Park Status	Park Name	Acreage	Play-ground	Soft Ball Field	Baseball Field	Basketball/ Multi-Use	Lighted Basketball Court	Tennis Court	Football Soccer Overlay	Football Soccer Field	Picnic Shelters	Open Shelter	Rest-room
RECREATIONAL PARKS														
H07	U	RIDGE ROAD RECREATIONAL PARK	74.7189	1	2	1			1		1	3		2
G11	D	SOUTH GERMANTOWN RECREATIONAL PARK	700.4416	2	2	2	1		2	2	2	4		1
Subtotal			775.1605	3	4	3	1		3	2	3	7		3
SPECIAL PARKS														
N30	D	WATERS HOUSE SPECIAL PARK	3.9											
H08		SOCCERPLEX OF SOUTH GERMANTOWN									24			24
Subtotal			3.9								24			24
Total			1920.6571	14	11	3	8	3	15	5	38	9	4	40

Community Recreation Center and Aquatic Facility Needs

Currently, the Germantown area is served by several public community centers and aquatic facilities. The Germantown Community Recreation Center and Germantown Outdoor Pool were built on a single site in combination with the Kingsview Middle School. The site includes outdoor recreation facilities and is located southwest and outside of the study area. The Germantown Indoor Pool, located at South Germantown Regional Park is a large full-service aquatic facility drawing from a regional audience. Plum Gar Neighborhood Recreation Center, situated at the farthest southeast corner of the study area, will be renovated by the Recreation Department. Last, an additional small facility is operated near the

intersection of Rt. 355 & Middlebrook Road by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington.

Based on the population of Germantown as well as the increased development of the mixed use “town center” areas, there is a significant need to locate additional community serving recreation facilities in this vicinity. Geographically, sites in the central and northeastern sections of Germantown would be most complementary to the existing facilities and serve both the “in-town” urban center residents in the vicinity of the Transit Corridor and those in growth areas north and east of the core study area.

Facilities would generally take the form of a multipurpose building blending community service with active and passive recreation/leisure

activities. Service populations include all ages, preschool through senior, from a surrounding 30,000 minimum-resident area. By taking advantage of the future development it may be possible to integrate facilities into the initial conceptual design of some mixed use projects. It may even be possible to conceive of a full service facility including outdoor features at the eastern edge of the Germantown community and a “downtown annex” in the Milestone/I-270 area that would provide residents of the higher density central sections with a smaller facility focused on basic key recreational elements.

Table 2: Summary of Park and Trail Recommendations Corridor Area

Proposed Parks and Open Space Germantown Study Area			
Park	Status	Issues	Opportunities or Recommendations
Town Center Commons, BlackRock Center for the Arts front lawn	Owned by Montgomery County	Poorly maintained	Encourage DOT to develop a plan for better public use with seating, landscaping, etc.
Family-oriented play park near Upcounty Regional Services Center	M&T Bank site	Exchange for Germantown Square Urban Park. Need to anchor south end of Century Boulevard Promenade.	Family oriented seating and playground.
Transit Neighborhood Parks : Cloverleaf Park Far North Park Seneca Meadow Park Milestone Green	Developer owned, could be public or private	Urban open spaces needed near future transit stops.	Flexible, level grassy area for variety of active pickup sports, seating, play structures, skateboarding spot. Possible location of cultural public art/artistic interpretive elements. Seneca Meadows Park could be combined with an urban recreation center on east side of I-270.
Town Center Urban Park	Proposed for construction in the Capital Improvements Program	Lack of play facilities for children	Explore installing climbable art either in the park or next to the library.
Germantown Square Local Park	Existing	Underused, inaccessible.	Swap for M&T Bank site near Town Center (Century Boulevard at Middlebrook Road).
Germantown Boys & Girls Clubs site (Germantown East Local Park)	Existing building provides recreation programming space.	Poor views into site from the street	Design, install, maintain streetscape, possibly partnering with Boys & Girls Clubs. Work with DOT to install safe pedestrian crossings.
Parks Beyond Study Area (To be used by residents of the study area)			
Kingsview Local Park	Facility Planning Priority Project	Needs program	Facilities for youth and teens, such as skate park or plaza, open play area, playground
Seneca Crossing Local Park	20-acre Facility Planning Priority Project in the FY07-12 CIP	Needs program	Provide needed fields, possibly cricket and other active recreation facilities
Expansion of Black Hill Regional Park	Under study	Valuable forest needs protection	Protect through easements or dedication

It is recommended that the M-NCPPC work closely with the Department of Recreation to incorporate community recreational facilities into a detailed land use plan for the further development of Germantown.

Stewardship of Natural Resources and Nature Oriented Recreation Facilities

The M-NCPPC made an early commitment to environmental stewardship and conservation when it was first formed in 1927 and began acquiring land surrounding the stream valley parks. This commitment has become an important principle that guides a wide range of planning and regulatory programs and projects.

As indicated on the Existing Parks Table, the Germantown area has over 800 acres of nature oriented stream valley parkland. The Great Seneca Stream Valley Park offers opportunities for natural oriented recreation such as enjoying nature, hiking, nature photography, bird watching, etc. The Black Hill Regional Park provides opportunities for water oriented recreation, picnicking, and hiking.

Natural Resource Recommendations:

- Develop all parks and open spaces in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- Examine feasibility of park acquisition of any properties that include outstanding natural resources if they become available, particularly those adjacent to Black Hill Regional Park or Great Seneca Stream Valley Park.