

# Appendix 6

## Policy Background



## Green Space Guidelines for the Silver Spring Central Business District

## **A. General Plan Refinement of the Goals and Objectives for Montgomery County (December 1993)**

The General Plan is a comprehensive framework for guiding physical development and managing limited resources in Montgomery County. The General Plan Refinement replaces the 1964 General Plan and the 1969 Update and provides a 21<sup>st</sup> century vision for Montgomery County. While it reaffirms the Wedges and Corridors concept as a framework for development, it builds upon it to define a total of four geographic components in the County: the Urban Ring, the Corridor, the Suburban Communities, and the Wedge, which are defined in terms of appropriate land uses, scale, intensity, and function.

As the County's longest-range and most visionary document, the General Plan Refinement establishes seven goals: Land Use, Housing, Employment/Economic Activity, Transportation, Environment, Community Identity and Design, and Regionalism, and associated objectives and strategies. Of special relevance to the present study are the following:

- Land Use Goal
  - Objective 8 "Provide a coordinated and comprehensive system of parks, recreation, and open space"
- Environment Goal
  - Objective 2 "Preserve natural areas and features that are ecologically unusual, environmentally sensitive, or possess outstanding natural beauty"
  - Objective 3 "Protect and improve water quality"
  - Objective 7 "Protect and improve air quality"
  - Objective 13 "Promote the efficient use of energy and plan for the County's long-term energy needs."

## **B. Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Master Plan (2005)**

The PROS Plan looks at park and open space needs for the county as a whole and for planning and community based team areas. It includes projected Population Changes by Planning Areas and provides relevant trends information, which show a projected 38 percent increase in the Silver Spring Planning Area population by 2020. The Silver Spring Planning Area encompasses the Silver Spring CBD, Takoma Park, Four Corners, North, East and West Silver Spring. In Silver Spring, age groups with an increase over 50 percent include youth ages 0 to 14, and 15-19. However, the increase in the population over 65 is nearly 75 percent. The Plan indicates that the County is a major migration gateway into Maryland. It mentions that for the community at large, recreation facilities (and parks) provide opportunities to gather for social experiences, to build a sense of community and civic pride, to build ethnic and cultural understanding, opportunities for individuals and groups to interact with nature within an urban setting, and a place for families to grow and connect with each other.

### C. Countywide Park Trails Plan (July 1998)

The Countywide Park Trails Plan proposes a 250-mile interconnected system of hard surface and natural surface trails of countywide significance. Although the Plan focuses on trails within the more than 25,000 acres of parkland owned by M-NCPPC, some trails in parkland owned by Federal, State, and municipal agencies have also been included. The Plan addresses the importance of facilities such as bike paths that are located outside of parkland but provide safe, attractive access to park trails.

This Plan provides an integrated, countywide vision for park trails. The guiding principles in the preparation of this document were: maintain a countywide perspective; emphasize connectivity; provide variety; establish guidelines to aid decisions at the local planning level; seek balance among recreation, transportation, and environmental concerns; establish the priority of key components of the Countywide network; designate a network which is responsive to population centers, both existing and planned; and recommend implementation strategies. The Plan recommends and sets priorities for routes that should be acquired, developed and open for public use in the next ten years.

### D. The Approved and Adopted Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan (February 2000)

*Green Downtown:* The Sector Plan establishes six themes that articulate the goals and vision for the CBD. The *Green Downtown* theme calls for a network of green urban parks connected by tree-lined streets and boulevards. This vision is to be achieved by applying seven different elements, which are: **urban boulevards, promenade streets, mixed streets, green streets, green parks, landscaped plazas and green parking lots**. The last four elements directly support and encourage green open space in the Silver Spring CBD. These elements envision spaces that “create visual and physical respite” and offer “formal and informal gathering spaces to complement street and building design” (p.22). They are seen as grassy, shaded places that “offer visual, physical, and recreational alternatives to the hard-edged urban environment” (p.23).

*Community Facilities:* The Sector Plan provides recommendations for existing and proposed Community Facilities in the CBD. Among them are specific parks and open spaces that could be built or renovated to improve the green space network in the Silver Spring CBD, such as:

1. Gateway Plaza (at Downtown Silver Spring)
2. Civic Plaza
3. Silver Triangle (i.e. Discovery Garden)
4. Silver Circle
5. Fidler Lane Promenade
6. Fenton Urban Park
7. Jesup Blair Park
8. Acorn Park
9. Hanson Park

Since the adoption of the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, only the expansion of Fenton Urban Park site remains to be implemented, the others have been either built or approved. However, most of the new facilities are hardscaped plazas rather than green parks. In addition, some like the formal garden next to Discovery Headquarters, are not perceived as public space because of physical elements that separate it from the public streetscape.

*Urban Recreation Facilities:* The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan also recommends the development of Urban Recreation Facilities, such as, a skateboard park, rock climbing wall, fitness facilities, sculpture playground, water fountain, ice rink, skate parks, and in-line hockey rinks, which are characteristic of urban environments in terms of scale, recreational structures, and activities. The Sector Plan lists the following as potential urban recreation sites:

1. Montgomery Regional Office (MRO) Building Garage site
2. Cameron/Second Street Garage
3. Ripley Parking Lot
4. Canada Dry site
5. Fenton Village Garage (Garage 4)
6. M-NCPPC Parking Lot
7. Fairview Park (Outside the CBD)
8. Jesup Blair Park
9. South Fenton Urban Park
10. Civic Center site

The Canada Dry site has been developed and the Civic Center site has been approved for development, respectively. The renovation of Jesup Blair Park has also been accomplished.

#### **E. Recreation Guidelines (1992)**

The Recreation Guidelines, approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board in 1992, provide a method for evaluating whether the recreation facilities for a particular residential community will be adequate, and give guidelines for the design and development of those facilities. The method involves calculating the demand points for each population category in each housing type, and then comparing these values to the supply points provided by each recreational facility for each population category. This quantitative method allows for objectively determining the adequacy of the recreational facilities for every residential development. Furthermore, the specific guidelines provided for the design of each facility, such as: area, setbacks, possible activities, and screening/landscaping, establish a platform for safety and design excellence that is consistent throughout the county. However, it is essential that these Guidelines be updated as soon as possible as they do not relate to new developments in heavily urbanized areas.

#### **F. Parks for Tomorrow (1998)**

Parks for Tomorrow is a supplemental Staff document to the 1998 Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Master Plan. The goal of this plan is to provide a system of urban parks and open spaces that serve the needs of our diverse communities and are attractive, safe and accessible. It addresses the increasingly urbanized areas of Montgomery County – areas that are experiencing the most rapid changes in the physical landscape, in society and in the economy. The vision in this plan for urban open spaces in Montgomery County is characterized by the following:

- Urban parks and open spaces that serve as community gathering places.
- Aesthetic open spaces that attract businesses and residents and contribute to urban revitalization.
- Recreation spaces for residents and employees.
- Attractive tree-lined streets that link the community to parks, businesses, shopping and public facilities.

#### **G. Legacy Open Space (LOS) Functional Master Plan (2001)**

The LOS Plan was created to preserve the best remaining open space of varying kinds throughout Montgomery County. One of the six categories within this plan is Urban Open Spaces. The goal of the LOS Plan is to identify urban open space opportunities within existing neighborhoods and pursue transfer or purchase of selected sites. The functional master plan identifies specific open space sites and provides criteria for selection of additional sites for the program. Criteria for urban open spaces include key open space along major highways, land within existing urban areas, and important urban natural areas. Any Urban Open Space sites that are added to the LOS plan may be protected through a variety of tools including transfer of other public land to Parks, dedication of land through development, and outright acquisition for parkland.

#### **H. Future Countywide Urban Park Plan (under development by the Department of Parks)**

This future Plan will amend the Park, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Master Plan for Montgomery County to better reflect the important role urban parks play in community life. The Plan will examine how the pattern of urban parks relate to existing and proposed urban growth areas and will propose the types of activities and amenities that are best suited for urban parks. Key aspects that include finance, management and ownership of urban open spaces will also be explored in order to find innovative, cost-effective and efficient strategies to sustain urban parks.