

# Takoma/Langley Crossroads

sector plan



## Appendix 4 Design

### Parks, Open Space, and Trail Connections

#### Introduction

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 urban areas like Takoma/Langley Crossroads 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 County’s 2005 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), which guides the County wide pattern of parkland and recreation needs. The TLC Plan’s park and trail related recommendations will update the 2005 LPPRP.

As areas urbanize, the roles and functions of public and private open space being planned, designed, and maintained change. The challenge for any plan is to protect existing park resources while concurrently planning for future needs. The range of recommendations should balance environmental stewardship with active recreation needs.

The Plan area provides some of the earliest examples of Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) park development. The Plan area’s park system pattern is characterized by the linear Long Branch Stream Valley Park, acquired to protect fragile natural environments and provide visual green relief from suburban development patterns of the early 20th century. Over the years, many of the park resources have changed little in size, but greatly in composition. Development upstream has eroded stream banks downstream. Non-native invasive species have been introduced from various sources providing competition with native plants. Active recreation facilities constructed in the past are in areas now identified as stream buffers.

#### Existing Park Inventory and Facilities

Park Name	Acreage	Facilities	Owner
Long Branch Stream Valley Unit 1A	10.4118	Hard Surface Trail	M-NCPPC
Becca Lilly (Part of Long Branch)	.982	1 Playground	M-NCPPC
Takoma Park Recreation Center	1.8557	1 Recreation Building	M-NCPPC
Portion of Sligo Creek Stream Valley Unit 1A	1	Hard Surface Trail	M-NCPPC
Glengary Place Park	.85		Takoma Park

The City of Takoma Park owns 10.4118 acres purchased in 1997 within the Long Branch Stream Valley Unit 1A. The Becca Lilly Neighborhood Park within the Long Branch Stream Valley Park provides a small hard surface trail and a playground. As typical with the older parks developed in the early years, the playground is located within the stream valley buffer and suffers from periodic flooding. The playground was replaced in 2001.

The old equipment was retained on-site at the community's request but will be removed should the pieces suffer irreparable damage.

## Park Planning Issues

The Plan should address the following park planning issues.

- The Plan area lacks a central open space to promote sense of place and community identity.
- The Takoma Park Recreation Center is owned by the Montgomery County Parks Department, is provided with a programming operating subsidy by the Montgomery County Recreation Department, and is operated by the City of Takoma Park. This convoluted arrangement is not ideal for planning, budgeting, maintenance, or operations for current services or long range building maintenance.
- The 2005 LPPRP documents facility needs to the year 2020. The biggest future facility need in the Silver Spring/Takoma Park area is for adult size multipurpose rectangular fields. Basketball courts are also an identified need.
- There is a gap in the Long Branch Stream Valley Park Unit 1A, south and west of Carroll Avenue. Acquisition of this gap from a willing seller would provide a wider public ownership corridor.

## Trail Planning Issues

- Connectivity between neighborhoods and the parks is weak but essential, and should be promoted where feasible.
- There is no formal trail in the Long Branch Stream Valley Park Unit 1A, south of Carroll Avenue.

## Park Planning Recommendations

The following park planning recommendations will address park planning issues within or affecting the Plan area.

1. Provide an urban park in the area of highest density near the Purple Line station and the Transit Center. This civic green will be owned by M-NCPPC and located at the southwest corner of University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue. The green should have expansive level areas for community events social gathering, informal play, and programs. This urban park will be Takoma Langley's central public place for outdoor community-wide activities and events, near the Purple Line station and the highest density mixed-use development.
2. Replace the Takoma Park Recreation Center. The biggest obstacle is the convoluted ownership, programming, and maintenance responsibilities

among three entities. To achieve a new building, the following sequence of events is recommended.

- Acquire the entrance to the Takoma Park Recreation Center. Acquiring this land will legally secure an entrance to the park property.
- A land exchange is consistent with Commission practice of land exchanges to further public goals. The City would deed to M-NCPPC the Long Branch Parcel 259 and M-NCPPC would deed the Takoma Recreation Center Parcel N621 to the City. The transfer deed for the Recreation Center property will contain a reversion clause stating, in essence, that if the property no longer functions for recreation purposes, it will return to M-NCPPC, if requested.

The Recreation Center property was purchased in the mid 1960s and the building was constructed in 1973. The building is aging and has developed a large liability of deferred maintenance. It has insufficient square footage for current needs and inefficient indoor circulation. The City of Takoma Park wishes to preserve the recreation center function at the site, but not necessarily deliver the service in the existing building. By aligning property ownership within City of Takoma Park control, creative ideas to replace the building can emerge.

The Long Branch Stream Valley Park Unit 1A is M-NCPPC owned and operated with the exception of Parcel 259 which was purchased by the City of Takoma Park in 1997. With consolidated ownership, the stream valley park can be under one management umbrella. Also, a land exchange is consistent with Commission practice of land exchanges to further public goals. After the Planning Board has approved redevelopment of the recreation center site with a project including a replacement recreation center, the City of Takoma Park would deed to M-NCPPC Long Branch Parcel 259; M-NCPPC would deed the Takoma Park Recreation Center property to the City.

- After the land exchange between M-NCPPC and the City of Takoma Park and re-zoning of the recreation center property, the City of Takoma Park and any selected partner will be obligated by the exchange agreement to build a new recreation center with additional development that should include senior housing, affordable housing, or local retail.

A new code-compliant building is the best option to preserve the recreation function at the site. The site is one half mile from the Purple Line and Transit Center, which will provide mass transit options. The new recreation center should be in the 20,000 square foot range.

3. Purchase if available, the Takoma Academy High School site for M-NCPPC park use to meet active recreation facility needs identified in the 2005 LPPRP.

The 2005 (or current) LPPRP should be examined to determine which facilities have a documented shortage. This property reflects one of the few opportunities to add significantly to the number of ballfields in the down-County area. The property currently has ballfields of marginal condition and questionable placement. A more efficient layout could provide quality ballfields and possibly add basketball courts. This site is adjacent to the Long Branch Stream Valley Park a park trail connects to the site. This recommendation re-confirms the 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan recommendation.

4. Purchase from willing sellers parcels adjacent to existing parks, as properties become available, to help meet recreation needs identified in the LPPRP and to expand existing green space.

Acquire additional properties as needed to enhance public use of the Long Branch Stream Valley Park. Acquire from willing sellers a portion the Agro Parcel P172, south of Carroll Avenue and west of the Long Branch Stream to complete Long Branch SVU 1A.

### Trail Planning Recommendations

1. Consider a sanctioned north-south trail along Long Branch SVU 1A south of Carroll Avenue to Jackson Avenue only if WSSC requires access for sewer line replacement or repair. A north-south trail parallel to the stream would require two of three bridges within the stream buffer. Construction of these bridges could cause environmental damage and this recommendation should only be implemented if WSSC requires access to the site for sewer infrastructure repairs or replacement.

### Historic Resources

The TLC Plan area has no identified historic resources listed either on the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites or in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The area experienced growth in the mid-20th century. There has not yet been a comprehensive survey of historic sites from this time period in Montgomery County. As resources come to maturity in this planning area, it will be appropriate to evaluate individual sites and districts to determine their historic or architectural significance.