

Questions	Values
Reference #	6740130
Status	Complete
First Name	Brian
Last Name	Holland
Street Address	Park Now for South Silver Spring
Address Line 2	8045 Newell Street, # 111
City	Silver Spring
State	Maryland
Zip Code	20910
Phone Number	703-731-1535
Email Address	park_now_for_southsilverspring@yahoo.com
Identify the nature of the amendment being requested and why an amendment is considered necessary in the context of the current master plan and zoning.	<p>The proposed amendment seeks to modify the Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan (CBD) of 2000. Specifically, the amendment seeks to designate the .94 acre parcel of land, located on Newell Street between Eastern Avenue and Kennett Street (current address 8001 Newell Street) as park land. Presently, this parcel is designated CBD-1. The CBD Plan presents a “Green Downtown” theme to enhance the quality of life for South Silver Spring residents. Specifically, the Green Downtown theme outlined in the Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan (CBD) of 2000 calls for a “well-placed green park” directly in the South Silver Spring neighborhood. The proposed amendment is intended to address the vision of Newell Street as a “Green Street” (note Map 18 on p.55), connecting with high-visibility to East- West Highway and Acorn Park while being a gateway focal point to DC’s adjacent Shepherd Park community. A reading of the Plan’s goals and the County’s vision notes the following: “Green Downtown: This Plan envisions shaded, tree-lined streets and well-placed green parks and plazas, creating a comprehensive system of open space that provide economic, environmental, and aesthetic benefits throughout downtown.” (p. 22) “Every opportunity should be used to add landscaping and green respites to the CBD’s hardscaped environment. Silver Spring’s urban profile and its residents’ quality of life will be improved by a series of tree-lined and connected urban parks, together creating a distinctive and safe open space system that will draw people to Silver Spring.” (p. 22) (Emphasis added). “The CBD’s linked open space system of gardens and parks should be designed and located for high visibility to offer seasonal variety, to be safe, to increase property values, and to provide flexible recreation opportunities. • Green parks are natural areas of respite and recreation. Grassy and shaded, parks can offer visual, physical, and recreational alternatives to the hard-edged urban environment. Parks of various sizes and character should be located throughout the CBD.” (p. 23) As the CBD Plan is 12 years old, with significant changes in circumstances since its adoption and with a revision of the Plan unlikely to occur in the near future, the amendment provides the Department with an opportunity to facilitate focused public engagement on a time-sensitive issue facing the community. In the context of the current master plan and zoning, the County recognized in 2000 that South Silver Spring area was “characterized by mixed building types and disparate commercial uses including aging, industrial, neighborhood convenience and service retail, offices, motels, a postal facility, and the former Canada Dry bottling plant.” (p. 50).</p>

Thus, increasing residential development options was an important land use objective. With re-designation of the South Silver Spring area to CBD-1 Zone, land use patterns have shifted from commercial to a greater residential character. The emerging dominant pattern of residential use has been mid- to high-rise multifamily apartment buildings, on East-West Highway. In side streets off East-West Highway, the height of buildings scale back to mid-rise levels of between 4 and 6 stories. Neighborhood residents suggest that the South Silver Spring has lost its indigenous character without a common area in which to hold neighborhood events but has become a “concrete jungle” without aesthetic appeal. Moreover, the goals of increasing urbanization and density stipulated under the CBD Plan have been met. The American Community Survey data calculated that census tracts 7025 and 7026.01, those inclusive of South Silver Spring, represented the densest population concentration within Montgomery County. Further, the neighborhood has an adjusted population ratio of 30,892 per square mile, which is three times denser than the District of Columbia in total (DC has an average of 10,065 persons per square mile). In the seven years from 2005 to 2012 the number of residential units has increased to an inventory of nearly 7,750 owner-occupied and rental apartments with a 32.8 percent rise in population to 10,536 persons in a 1 mile radius of the location of the proposed amendment. Rapid population and uncontrolled housing growth, is a growing concern among residents. The area has witnessed 6 new multifamily buildings completed or permitted for construction since the 2010 U.S. Census that add another 1,194 units of multifamily housing and nearly 1,600 persons in just the last two years. (see Exhibit 2) The South Silver Spring neighborhood remains in deficit of “green” space. The Silver Spring CBD Green Space Guidelines (2010) notes that the neighborhood has 57 open spaces to cover 32.61 acres with only 10 publicly-owned parks at 17.31 acres. (p. 20). However, these Guidelines recognize these results are skewed by inclusion of 14-acre Jesup Blair Park, which, when eliminated, provides an average available open and green space allotment of 0.33 acres (p. 20). However, recognizing that within an 800 foot radius of the proposed site for the amendment to the 2000 Plan, and with an immediate catchment area of 2,227 residential units and nearly 3,800 persons, Acorn Park at .12 acres provides the only consolidated “green” space to the community – less than half of the recommended Guidelines of 0.25 acres of “green space” within half-mile radius of urban districts. While the optional method of development has, as the Guidelines note, “been the most significant tool in creating the CBD’s existing public use space infrastructure,” (p. 43), these same Guidelines also recognize that “not all public use spaces are green spaces” (p. 20). Indeed, there is strong site evidence within the neighborhood that urban plazas are mostly paved surfaces rather than increase proportionately the availability of green space within the neighborhood, (see Exhibit 2). Thus, the goal of balanced growth to support more “green” space, consistent with the South Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan and CBD Green Space Guidelines, has not been met. Implementation of the proposed amendment is a corrective step toward meeting the County’s land use goals.

Identify the area for which an amendment is being requested. You must specify the land area for which an amendment is requested, including any of the following: property

The proposed amendment is focused on the 402’ x 102’ property (currently in use as a self-storage facility at 8001 Newell Street). It is located specifically at the intersection points of Eastern Avenue and Newell Street and the extension of Newell Street to East-West Highway, on the edge of the South Silver Spring overlay district (see Exhibit 1).

maximum file  
size 50MB)

Describe how  
the requested  
amendment  
benefits the  
public and what  
impacts might  
be anticipated  
as a result of  
the application.

The requested amendment offers significant economic, environmental and aesthetic benefits to the South Silver Spring community. Economic Based on 2012 Montgomery County Real Property Tax data, the current property holder contributes \$60,178 in tax revenues, based on a 2011 assessed value of land and property of \$3,622,700. Within a one-half mile radius of the proposed amendment's location, there are 14 owner-occupied and rental properties with a current aggregate assessed value of \$548,845,000. Over 20 independent studies confirm that the access and availability of "green" space – compared to "open" space – provides a significant increase in property values to "proximate users" of parks within a 2000 foot radius. One analyst, John Crompton, noted in his conservative estimate that "the magnitude of the proximate effect [2000 feet] varied according to size, usage and design of parklands, but a positive impact of 20% on property value abutting or fronting a passive park area is a reasonable guideline as a point of departure." ("Perceptions of How the Presence of Greenway Trails Affect the Value of Proximate Properties, 2001, p.116). Applying the same methodology to the proximate users of a proposed park at 8001 Newell Street, assessed value could increase to \$658,614,600, generating an additional \$1,148,963 in property tax revenues. (see Exhibit 3). By contrast, residential development at this site yields significantly less revenue potential. The revenue impact of a proposed residential building, with assessed value of land and building at \$40,000,000, would net \$526,067 (under current rates). The proposed residential development assumes that the County will not offer the typical 40% property tax abatement which has been introduced to spur development in South Silver Spring. With abatement in place, the positive economic impact would be \$311,027. Thus, the positive revenue impact of a park is \$837,936 greater than that of a residential development. These economic impact analyses do NOT account for the potential financial losses faced by owners in proximate buildings from a reduction in assessed value and the subsequent tax revenue losses. (An informal poll of 10 realtors, serving Silver Spring, suggests that owners in nearby buildings will lose between 5 and 15 percent of current assessed value with a new residential building). Further, this review does not reflect the significantly lower maintenance cost of a one-acre park compared to the increased cost for public services (e.g., police, sanitation, infrastructure) required by an influx of 300 persons (assuming 187 residential units with an average of 1.63 persons per unit) to the neighborhood. As Crompton notes, "when open space is transformed into homes, the taxes of existing residents invariably increase because while the development generates tax revenue, the cost of providing public services and infrastructure to that development is likely to exceed the tax revenue emanating from it. The results of these studies indicate that favoring residential development at the expense of open land does not alleviate the financial problems of communities. Indeed, it is likely to exacerbate them." ("The Impact of Parks and Open Spaces on Property Values," 2007, pp.32-37.) Environmental Ample studies recognize the benefits of park, recreation and open space. In fact, the Montgomery County Vision 2030 Strategic Plan made called for increased parks and identified the benefits from additional open space. The County's plan recognized the positive impact of a park noting a Trust for Public Land report, "The Benefits of Parks: Why America needs More City parks and Open Space," stating that these multiple benefits include: • Physical activity makes people healthier and increases with access to parks. • Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health. • Value is added to community through economic development and tourism. • Trees improve air quality, act as natural air conditioners, and assist with storm water control and erosion. • Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced. • Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created. Moreover, the draft PROS Plan notes the need for increasing urban parks and "green" space based on relevant "quality of life" and "social capital" issues suggesting: "New research that has studied the relationship between urban areas and people's mental and emotional well-being cite the design and condition of cities as being associated with the happiness of the residents of those cities. The research has found that cities that provide easy access to convenient public transportation and to cultural and leisure amenities promote more happiness among the city

residents. In addition, cities that are designed to foster social connections are deemed “happier” places to live and raise a family. Urban parks provide the much needed spaces to gather, to hold cultural events and to provide the leisure activities that urban residents seek in their pursuit of happiness.”(Public Hearing Draft of 2012 PROS Plan, p.26) Aesthetic A park, located at 8001 Newell Street, is the most compatible use for the land. The park could form an emerald necklace beginning at the open space of Veridian at East West Highway and move eastward to include Acorn Park and ending at Eastern Avenue. It could serve as a gateway for those entering the County from the District. Further, the park represents a more consistent example of the spatial context and neighborhood site line which includes three to four story garden apartments on the north side and a 60 foot setback before 8045 Newell on the south side. When the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan was adopted in 2000, the block was framed by a postal facility, the storage building and an underutilized office building. Development of two properties for residential use – at 8045 Newell and Eastern Village Co-Housing - is consistent with the intention of the CBD plan. Yet infilling mid-rise residential development between two pre-existing multifamily buildings is an inaccurate read of the CBD plan’s goal. Added mid-rise residential development constitutes a breach of consistent site line scalability on the street. It also is a destabilizing encroachment of space that deprives both pre-existing buildings of sunlight situated on a subterranean and antiquated (last upgraded in 1983) infrastructure already strained to provide efficient electrical, sewage and sanitary systems.

Identify the master or sector plan for which the amendment is requested and how the requested amendment advances current land use objectives, including but not limited to: providing needed housing and affordable housing improving the jobs-housing ratio public benefits improved transit commuting enhancement of existing and small businesses using existing infrastructure for sustainable growth	<p>The proposed amendment offers a balanced approach to the Silver Spring CBD Plan to meet the County’s current land use objectives. The amendment addresses the changing demographics and economic trends faced by South Silver Spring. Since the CBD Sector Plan’s adoption 12 years ago, the population has risen by 32.8 percent to 10,536 persons in 2012, up from 7,929 persons in 2005. This population has been met with an expansion of residential construction to 7,747 units by the end of 2012, a surge of 1,803 units since 2005. These trends have accelerated since the 2010 U.S. Census, where in the past two years, the neighborhood has witnessed an addition of 1,618 persons and 1,194 new residential units. One could argue that the goals of supporting more residential options under the CBD Plan have well been attained. Evidence suggests that there has been an over-expansion of residential development to support the demands of a highly educated, diverse and technological savvy population by new County residents. A September 2011 Multifamily Rental Market Assessment, prepared for the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development by the Real Property Research Group, identified that the vacancy rate for multifamily housing in class A properties in the neighborhood (those sought by newcomers to Silver Spring) is 8.3 percent. Further, the report notes an excess supply of 321 rental units for the south Silver Spring neighborhood to continue until the end of 2016. These projections do NOT include of 406 more rental units with the newly opened Galaxy apartments (8025 13th Street) (196 units) and 8021 Georgia Avenue (210 units) in 2012. Oversaturation of the rental market with the potential construction of additional residential housing – planned by Comstock Homes at 8001 Newell Street (with a projected 187 more units) - is a likely outcome within the rental market, even as regional economic conditions improve. Moreover, while transit-oriented development (TOD) remains a laudable goal within the County’s CBD plan, residential development at 8001 Newell Street – at greater than .6 miles from Silver Spring Metro – does not fall within the County’s determination of TOD. With an immediate catchment area of 800 feet within the proposed amendment’s location, there are 2,277 residential units with nearly 3,700 persons. Yet the deficit of actual “green” space is significant as Acorn Park (at .12 acres) does not provide an adequate land to person ratio, even in a dense, urban environment, against the County’s Guidelines. Residents of the District’s Shepherd Park neighborhood (right across the street from the amendment’s proposed location) also recognize the lack of amenities within South Silver Spring. They suggest that additional residential development over parkland would increase the negative spillover (e.g., parked cars on residential streets, dog defecation on private properties) that flows into the District. The proposed location represents an ideal fit for meeting the County’s stipulated 2010 Guidelines (pp. 22-26) as the parcel: 1) is greater than one-half acre in size, 2) is configured as a</p>
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transitions to existing neighborhoods meeting changing demographics or economic trends	<p>rectangle and requires no assemblage of other properties, and 3) is enclosed by the Eastern Avenues and Newell Street. While the Green Space Guidelines of 2010 suggested that some locations were ranked higher than or on par with the proposed parcel, the earlier assumptions behind that rank score need to recognize: - availability of the property for sale and the discontinuation of its current business in 2012 - ability for park conversion without disruption to businesses and parking (Informal conversations with owners of Mamma Lucia, Giant, and Oriental East suggest their fear of a minimum 25% loss if a “green” park was constructed over a two-year period at Blair Plaza, a location which ranked higher than proposed amendment location.) - the changing population and demographic dynamics since 2010 (See support letter from the Trust for Public Land attached in Exhibit 5.) The proposed amendment is a more faithful and accurate reading of the CBD Plan’s vision, compared to a potentially misguided residential development. With a proposed park anchoring the corner of Eastern Avenue and Newell Street, this could provide an attractive gateway for District residents to enter the County as a bookend to the other “green” gateway at 16th Street and East West Highway. Further, the proposed park at 402’ x 102’ follows an accurate interpretation of the CBD’s Green Downtown theme and the intent to provide a “linked open space system of gardens and parks ... located for high visibility to offer seasonal variety, to be safe, to increase property values, and to provide flexible recreation opportunities.” (p. 23). As such, the linkage of the proposed park, Acorn Park, and the limited open space at Veridian offers an inviting “emerald necklace” that addresses a key County land use objective for Silver Spring. Lastly, another key objective of the CBD Sector Plan is the promotion of “reusing and incorporating historic resources into new projects to preserve Silver Spring’s unique past, giving texture and depth to the CBD’s redevelopment.”(p.135). Archival research that suggests that the 8001 Newell Street site was home to a now-lost historical heritage: “In 1840, Blair encountered a "mica-flecked" spring in the vicinity of what is now Acorn Park. He liked the location so much that he bought the surrounding land and created a summer home which he called "Silver Spring.” (Jerry McCoy, Historic Silver Spring, 2005, pp.26-32). “Blair Mansion was centerpiece for a farm totaling nearly 1000 acres,” (Elizabeth Bentley, Civil War History in Takoma Park’s Front and Back Yards, Takoma Voice, July 1998). “Many evidences of intimacy between the President and the Blair family existed at this time, including Lincoln's frequent trips to Silver Springs,” (James Trietsch, The Printer and the Prince, 1955, p.243). “Francis Preston Blair Sr.'s mansion Silver Spring faced a large opened expanse of yard where President Lincoln and Francis Preston Blair III and his friends played "town ball." (Allen Clark, Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital, 1925). With historical signage, parkland at 8001 Newell Street could be a point of interest for increased tourism, another objective of the CBD Plan.</p>
What zoning changes are necessary to implement the amendment being requested?	<p>No zoning changes are necessary to implement the amendment. However, the amendment is offered as a “smart” growth perspective to improve the South Silver Spring’s quality of life – as well as those of its neighbors within the District - to counterbalance the inexorable pressure of residential development. Further, though there is no need for rezoning, the proposed park meets each of the County’s identified site considerations for green space within The Silver Spring CBD Green Space Guidelines (2010) (pp. 22-26). Specifically: • Size – ‘They [urban spaces] are often rectangular and between one half and one acre.’” (p. 22) The proposed park would fall within a .94 acre, rectangular plot, measuring 402’ x 102’ in area. • Enclosure – “The green spaces proposed should have a degree of enclosure created by a building wall or street edge on at least three sides.” (p.24). The proposed park would be enclosed by three sides – 1) the retaining wall of 8045 Newell, 2) the public art of 8045 Newell, and 3) the street scape of Eastern Avenue. • Visibility – “The green spaces need to be visible from surrounding streets for security and interest.” (p.25). The proposed park would be visible from Eastern Avenue and within sight line, at less than .1 miles away, of East-West Highway. • Connection – “Any successful green space must be connected and easily accessible with multiple access points to surrounding streets and sidewalks, mid-block connections, and proximity to transportation.” (p.25). The proposed park is connected easily as a link to East-West Highway and Eastern Avenue. It is accessible to mid-block connections at Kennett Street and is close to the S2 and S4 Metro bus routes</p>

and Ride-On Route 28 (the Van Go downtown Silver Spring shuttle). • Activation – “Activating a site with surrounding uses and planned activities integrates it into community life.” (p.25). The proposed park will not only be activated by the 2,277 residential units of Silver Spring residents that surround the park within an 800 foot radius but activation will also be facilitated by residents of the District in nearby side streets, 300 persons employed at Discovery Communications facility at 8045 Kennett Street, the tourists at the nearby Travelodge, Days Inn and Comfort Inn hotels, and those seeking respite after attending one of four churches (Shepherd Park Christian Church, Ethiopian Evangelical Church, St. Mary’s Baptist Church, and/or La Nueva Jerusalem) that are located less than .25 miles from the proposed location. • Green – “A portion of the public use space, ranging between one half and one acre, should be consolidated green area, such as a lawn.” (p.26). The proposed park measures .94 acre and is intended to be a consolidated green area.

<p>Identify interested parties relevant to your application. For small geographic areas, include the consent of property owners for the subject property. For larger areas, include any materials to indicate who has been contacted and any relevant correspondence.</p>	<p>The sponsors of this amendment were only made aware of the opportunity to submit a Minor Master Plan Amendment process in late July. Within a compressed schedule, a concerted community awareness campaign was launched to raise the visibility of the potential park at the proposed location, identify potential interested parties, and secure community support for this amendment proposal. The awareness campaign has involved several key elements: design and transmission of an online petition (<a href="http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/silverspringpark">http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/silverspringpark</a>, see Exhibit 4 for 76 online petition comments, full petition data will be given to the County separately), distribution of flyers at public places in the community, public advertisement within the Gazette (August 15, 2012 and August 22, 2012) and posting of links to the petition to homeowner associations, condominium boards, apartment community newsletters, the neighborhood’s large employers (i.e., NOAA and Discovery Communications), and selected community bulletin boards at retail establishments. In targeting our efforts, sponsors of the amendment shared the petition with owners and renters of the 14 multifamily properties in the area to include: - Argent Apartments (rental) - Aurora Condominiums (owner-occupied) - Bennington Apartments (rental) - Blair East (rental) - Blair Plaza (rental) - Eastern Village Co-Housing (owner-occupied) - Galaxy Apartments (rental) - MICA Condominiums (owner-occupied) - Rock Creek Springs (rental) - Silverton Condominiums (owner-occupied) - Spring Gardens Apartments (rental) - Veridian (rental) - 1200 East West-Highway (rental) - 8045 at Silver Spring Metro (owner-occupied) These buildings were targeted as they are likely to be the most proximate users (defined as within a half-mile radius) of the proposed park at the 8001 Newell Street location. These buildings constitute 2,227 residential units with an estimated population of 3,711 persons. As of this filing, we have secured 345 (online and paper) signatures on the petition, including 255 proximate users, including property owners, renters and the property managers of the Veridian and the Bennington Apartments, indicating broad and high community support for the proposed amendment. (In fact, the number of petition filers among proximate uses represents 7 percent of those who live in the 14 buildings – an unusually high level of interest and engagement for a relatively small parcel of land. (Typically, land use decision making generates far less public visibility). Our submission of this petition also includes unedited comments and feedback from residents who have voiced their interest and strong support of the amendment. About 10 percent of signers are residents of nearby Shepherd Park who live within a few blocks of the proposed location, yet they recognize and identify the negative spillover of over-development in South Silver Spring. Other signers represent those who work, shop, visit, or own property in the neighborhood and are interested parties as they – as all public lands do – benefit all persons, not just a set of private stakeholders. Two potential public-private partnerships might be forged to facilitate the development of the park. One could be a relationship with Discovery Communications (which facilitated the acquisition and development of the Discovery Garden.) Alternatively, The Trust for Public Land has informally suggested that it could provide third-party transactional and fundraising support for this parcel’s designation as a park, if the County deemed this site an option for future green space development. In the absence of a public-private partnership to purchase the parcel to facilitate the creation of a park, the County could reallocate current budgetary priorities to shift capital budget resources from more</p>
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	suburban areas to the urban, well-populated South Silver Spring.
Do you consider traffic volumes or transit patterns to be a major consideration in your application and if so, how do you propose to address those concerns?	The proposed amendment does not reflect the need for a traffic study nor does the amendment require consideration of transit patterns to implement its recommendation.
Has your request been the subject of a previous master plan amendment, rezoning, zoning text amendment or similar application?	No. This request has not received any prior review or been subject to any other zoning or rezoning application.
<i>Date</i>	2012-09-07 12:08:23
<i>Start Time</i>	2012-09-07 11:50:32
<i>Finish Time</i>	2012-09-07 12:08:23
<i>Duration</i>	17m 51s
<i>User</i>	209.190.232.66
<i>Browser</i>	IE 9
<i>OS</i>	Windows
<i>Referrer</i>	<a href="http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/minor_master_plan_amendments/application.shtm">http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/minor_master_plan_amendments/application.shtm</a>