

Hillandale Citizens Association, Inc.  
Silver Spring, Maryland

To: PHED Chair Floreen, Councilmember Reimer, Councilmember Leventhal  
CC: Councilmember Hucker, Parks Director Riley, Planning Board Chair Anderson  
Executive Director Michaelson

Date: April 6, 2018

sent via e-mail

Subject: FY19-24 CIP: Hillandale Local Park Funding & Schedule

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Dear Members of the Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee:

After much consideration, including meetings with both Parks and Planning Board leadership, and follow-on discussions with Parks Staff, we strongly urge you to consider that **the “\$6M plan” is the absolute minimum that will address the extensive structural, environmental, and safety issues in the Hillandale Local Park.** Despite the best efforts of the Parks Staff and leadership, there is simply no way to adequately provide the required infrastructure, address basic accessibility and recreational uses, and undo the decades of deterioration in the Hillandale Local Park with the “\$5M plan”.

We thank you for postponing action on the capital budget item pertaining to the redevelopment of the Hillandale Local Park. We are grateful that you have acknowledged the importance of this project and the need to be responsive to the concerns expressed by many residents of the east county that are eager to see investment in this long neglected park. We appreciate your recognition that the substantial repairs, required renovations, and a few improvements in the Hillandale Park are simply outside of the scope of the Park Refresher program.

#### COMMUNITY POSITION BACKGROUND

As noted in the Staff Report for Monday's meeting, following the PHED Committee's work session on February 12, representatives from the Hillandale Community promptly organized a meeting with Parks staff, including Parks Director Mike Riley. At this meeting, it was agreed that a follow-up meeting with Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson was needed. Both meetings were very productive. As noted in the staff report, we left the second meeting with Casey Anderson (held on Monday, April 2) agreeing that while we would certainly need to compromise, and the basic concept outlined in the \$5M seemed a reasonable place to start, we

also acknowledged that additional information was needed regarding some of the reductions to the plan's scope. We have worked diligently in recent days to better understand the full impact of the reductions from the \$6M to the \$5M proposed plans.

We remind you that the Hillandale Local Park is a critical component of the realization of the vision that this council approved under the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan. The Master Plan identified the need to enhance recreational amenities in the planning area. Montgomery Parks' analysis under the Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan has identified inequity in access to parks in areas of the county where there is a high concentration of lower income households.

Hillandale Local Park is located prominently on New Hampshire Avenue, making it easily accessible by the various single-family and apartment home communities. This 24 ½ acre park is adjacent to the Food and Drug Administration headquarters—a vital component of the science gateway vision and anticipated economic, recreation and housing resurgence that is planned for the east county.

The needed improvements in the Hillandale Local Park will address problems with safety, access and circulation. The project will ensure ADA compliance and environmental protection. The project cost includes removal of the existing features located within the stream bed; removal of the Parks Department building, realignment of the vehicular entrance to prevent vehicles from crossing New Hampshire Avenue at an uncontrolled location (which has caused numerous auto collisions), implementation of the shared use path along New Hampshire Avenue (as outlined in the White Oak Master Plan) as well as addressing decades of neglect.

While we were hopeful that the \$5M plan would contain sufficient park improvements to address the various needs and community priorities, after gaining a more robust understanding, our community does NOT support the proposed \$5M option as being adequate.

#### CRITICAL COMPONENTS NOT ADDRESSED

We feel strongly that the scope of the estimated \$6M plan is the minimum needed to achieve the various goals of this park redevelopment project. As was noted in earlier testimony, this park has various safety issues that MUST be addressed. What is lost under the \$1M reduction to the \$5M plan includes:

- Sufficient parking to support the expanded use anticipated under these improvements
- Connection to CHI (which includes 30 additional parking spaces)

- Quality playground elements
- Deep renovation to the soccer field with a reasonable level of turf quality that will be able to survive expected use, despite the lack of irrigation
- Separation of the basketball and tennis courts
- Adult exercise stations to support use by the general public as well as the physically disabled members at CHI
- Lighted parking lot, which is critical to support use of the lighted basketball and tennis courts for after-dark use

We appreciate the worthwhile discussions with Parks Department leadership over two lengthy meetings. We came to the table prepared to compromise and we were willing to accept the \$5M plan, provided some of the critical eliminated elements were added back in. Upon review of the costs and detailed impacts of the elements eliminated under the \$5M plan, we urge County Council approval of the \$6M concept plan to fully and adequately renovate the Hillandale Local Park. This \$6M plan is the version that was drafted by Parks Department staff when the Council originally reduced the Parks bond limit. The \$6M plan is what staff recommended and preserves much of the original community priorities and current expectations.

Respectfully submitted,

Margie Goergen-Rood  
President, Hillandale Citizens Association