

Dear Montgomery County Council

I am Tony Altar and my family and I have lived in Garrett Park for 27 years. I served two terms as Councilmember for Garrett Park when Doug Duncan was the County Executive. I ride for the DC Wheels Skateboard team, and continue to be active in the sport I love. I helped pioneer skateboarding in Los Angeles as one of the first to skateboard, winning skateboard tournaments in California and placing 5th in the Second National Skateboard tournament in 1966.

I've seen the sport mature to where it is today, in skills. Even more important, skateboarding is for many youths one of the only, or main, social points of contact. It also provides health benefits through increased stamina, strength, and skill training. Compared to other sports, like basketball, skateboarding is safer and the financial barrier for entry is almost as low as a pair of sneakers.

I am also a Member of the Skatepark Design Workgroup for Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The input of this group is helping shape the design of the skatepark portion of the Wheaton Action Sports Park. It has become clear over several sessions that our input and views on the park mirrors the beliefs of many community members that this facility will bring huge financial, health, social, and cultural benefits to our county.

As you know, there is a large need for well-designed facilities for skateboarding and family-oriented recreational options in Montgomery County. The proposed Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan is a practical use of underused land and a cost-effective way to enrich our county. The design is revolutionary and it will work. It will bring in families of participants, each of whom can find at least one activity they love to do.

The cost-effective, and relatively low maintenance of the skate park, bike parks, adventure play spaces, climbing facilities, walking paths, and community open spaces would be a jewel in the Crown of Wheaton area public facilities. It will stimulate commerce as well as social cohesion among residents.

Please plan for the near future, so that we can see the Wheaton Action Sports Park become a reality for individuals, families, and our county. Please find room in the County Executive's proposed FY26 Operating Budget for Montgomery Parks Department's request. Let's support the many young people who have little to turn to but a board with wheels, a provide a world-class facility where they can meet others in a health-promoting, socially interactive environment of our own creation.

Thank you.

Tony Altar

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