

My name is Eva Santorini. My husband and I have lived in the Rosemary Hills section of Silver Spring since 1988. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to offer public testimony on the long-term County's CIP Budget.

I will focus on two areas of concern, but will mention others that desperately need our support.

PARKS

We live around the corner from Rosemary Hills-Lyttonsville Park which is especially popular and beloved for its open green space and its well-visited athletic fields and tennis courts. I love to watch neighbors during my walks: young and old; homeowners and apartment dwellers; long-established neighbors and newly-arrived immigrant families; dog walkers; students; and fitness fans. My favorite sight is seeing children learning to navigate the playground equipment and watching some run with wild abandon, just enjoying themselves as they chase a ball or each other.

Support of Montgomery County's Department of Parks is critical. After the neighboring communities of Lyttonsville, Rosemary Hills, and Rock Creek Forest worked together to advocate for the long-neglected maintenance issues and improvements of the athletic fields; better tree care; and for the wonderful open space (that is the park's greatest 'amenity'!), I look forward to the improvements that were promised: a new pavilion; the resurfacing of the tennis courts; a new soccer court; and the expansion of the ever-popular basketball courts.

The design of the future Lyttonsville Civic Green was developed by Parks designer Ching-Fang Chen with diligent input of our community. As the Purple Line nears completion, we move closer to the transformation of that tiny parcel of land - still used as a construction staging area - to a beautiful park in which visitors learn of the local history. It will serve as the perfect spot to honor the Lyttonsville community during future Talbot Avenue Bridge Lantern Walks. Users of the Capital Crescent Trail which will run adjacent to the small park will be able to rest there and discover the history of that community.

There are many communities who love their local parks just as much as I love ours. The value of having a nearby park to relax in, to play in, to walk through, to meet friends at, is enormous. During Covid and now, during these fraught times, being able to enjoy a park's welcoming green spaces and playgrounds can restore some peace of mind.

RECREATION

Ensuring funding for our County's Department of Recreation and its 37 Rec centers is more critical than ever. Many of the facilities are old and are being used more and more and require

sufficient funding for staffing and maintenance. Summer Fun Programs provide a safe and fun time for children and all children over the age of 5 are welcome while local advisory boards encourage residents to attend classes and presentations during the day and evening hours. The use of fitness centers and attendance in after-school programs and classes for seniors around the county is rising. The building themselves and the equipment (HVAC, security cameras, pumping, etc.) must be maintained and replaced as needed. Some costs, such as swimming pool maintenance, can easily skyrocket.

I would like to draw your attention to one specific project that has been in the making for many years: the Lyttonsville Museum which is to be housed at the Gwendolyn E. Coffield Community Center. Charlotte Coffield and Patricia Tyson tirelessly worked on creating a secure space for artifacts and photographs that would tell the story of this African-American community. After exhibiting a large-scale display of historic photographs during February in celebration of Black History Month, a Coordinating Committee of current and former residents of Lyttonsville and other interested individuals from the surrounding communities is pushing to open a separate space to show and rotate exhibits and to hold presentations and educational meetings for visitors.

EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES

I cannot stress the importance of keeping our schools and Montgomery College in tip-top shape with strong leadership and funding for teachers. A strong education is critical for an informed and civic-minded population.

I care deeply for our precious Montgomery County libraries. They are real ‘soft diplomacy’ investments in our children and literacy and knowledge and quality of life and lifelong learning. Growing up, we often spent much of our days reading and keeping cool in the air-conditioned, comfortable, and safe libraries. Even today I feel rich when visiting my local libraries (Chevy Chase, Silver Spring, Bethesda) and leave with a few new books to devour.

ENVIRONMENT AND TRAFFIC

Ongoing care for stormwater management through the use of raingardens will protect our neighborhoods and surrounding areas. Focus on native plants and ensuring the Weed Warrior program to control non-native invasives will protect our local flora and fauna. Maintaining a healthy tree coverage will improve quality of life. Recycling efforts should be maintained. Repositioning lighting as it needs to be replaced can cut down on light pollution, while incorporating motion-detector lighting can keep our streets safe while saving resources.

The expansion of public transportation and bike lanes throughout the county and the return of the much-beloved Capital Crescent trail should be funded to offer options away from our overdependence on cars. Traffic calming and walkability projects throughout our neighborhoods will ensure residents' safety and improved health.

In closing I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak up and support some of the wonderful programs and departments I feel strongest about in Montgomery County.

Eva Santorini
8714 Sundale Dr
Silver Spring, MD 20910