

Honorable Councilmembers,

I urge you to revise the proposed Operating Budget to approve Montgomery Park's requested 7.2% budget increase for fiscal year 2026. I strongly feel that it is worthwhile to ensure our Parks Department generally has the necessary funds to not only continue their current services, but to increase programming. Particularly, a 7.2% budget increase would secure an appropriate amount of funds to develop and build the Wheaton Action Sports Park as part of the Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan.

The proposed Action Sports Park presents a unique opportunity to meet the needs of our diverse community. On a busy day at the Rockville Skate Park, one will see a lot of people weaving around and dodging features on their bikes, scooters, skates, and boards or even climbing on obstacles—not the intended uses of the ramps and rails in the park. This highlights the need for the bike skills course, pump track, and climbing obstacles included in the designs for the Action Sports Park. Furthermore, action sports have a relatively low barrier to entry and offer a unique platform for self expression while developing self confidence and healthy habits. The Wheaton Action Sports Park has the potential to offer such a platform for all members of the community and serve as another venue for community programming such as recreational meet-ups, events, lessons, and summer camps.

The Action Sports Park also has the potential to draw people in from outside of our county. From my perspective as a person who skateboards, it is common to travel between skate parks around the DC-Baltimore metro area—and beyond—in search of different and unique features. If the necessary funds are secured, and a well-executed and exciting action sports complex is built in our county, it would serve as a funnel to the businesses—such as restaurants, shops, and hotels—outside of the park itself. Beyond local programming, the Action Sports Park has the potential to serve as a venue for larger contests, demonstrations, and other regional events. In this way, The Wheaton Action Sports Park can be considered not an expense, but an investment in the county.

Considering the costs of materials as well as retaining a reputable design-build firm, it is necessary to allocate more funds towards Montgomery Parks beyond the currently proposed 3.2% budget increase. Skateboarding's recent inclusion in the Summer Olympics underscores the rise in popularity of action sports, so the time is right to develop a world class platform for action sports here in Montgomery County. I envision the potential benefit of such a sports complex to be akin to that of the nationally recognized Maryland Soccerplex in Germantown which attracts over 1 million local and national visitors per year. Thank you for your consideration and dedication to our community.

Sincerely,
Jack McBride
Rockville, MD