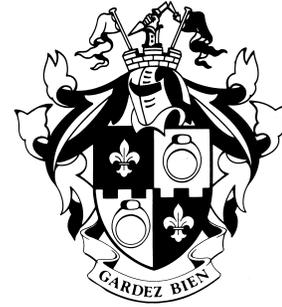


M-NCPPC



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M-NCPPC, County Council and County Executive Announce Four Legacy Open Space Acquisitions

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) Montgomery County Planning Board, the Montgomery County Council and County Executive today announced they have acquired four properties under the Legacy Open Space program. These four acquisitions bring the total number of sites protected through the Legacy program to 17. To date, more than 2,800 acres have been protected through the program, including 1,700 acres of acquisition and 1,100 acres of easements.

"Thanks to our Legacy Open Space program, Maryland's 'greenest county' is permanently preserving and protecting open space and environmentally and historically significant land," said Councilmember Nancy Floreen, who chairs the Council's Transportation & Environment Committee. "This wonderful program has gone a long way to help us reach the extraordinary achievement that 47% of this County is 'Forever Green' which benefits us, our children and our children's children."

"The purchase of these four properties is another investment in preserving our land resources today for a better environment in the future," said Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan. "It is essential that we protect the County's few remaining natural areas and preserve critical open spaces, but in order to succeed we need additional State support."

Capitol View Park Heritage Site, Kensington, MD

M-NCPPC recently purchased three acres within the Capitol View Park Historic District to protect a key piece of Heritage Open Space in the southern part of Montgomery County. Located on Capitol View Avenue between Beechbank Road and Leafy Avenue, the property surrounds an existing historic bungalow. Bruce, Christopher and Stuart Cohen executed the contract with M-NCPPC for the acquisition price of \$2,360,000. Significant both as an environmental setting for the 1907 bungalow and as wooded open space, the property recalls and preserves the history of Capitol View Park's beginnings as a 19th century community built along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad.

Darby House and Store, Beallsville, MD

Another heritage site has been protected in recent months. Two historic structures located in the Beallsville Historic District, the Darby House and Store, have been acquired by Legacy Open Space along with 26 acres of land. Located at the corner of Darnestown Road (MD 28) and Beallsville Road (MD 109), the property extends to the north, reaching the Woodstock Equestrian Park. M-NCPPC acquired the property from the Estate of Harry Dunbar Darby for \$670,000.

As early as the 1820's and 1830's, the Darby House and Store site was used as a store and blacksmith shop. However, Harry C. Darby built the current store in 1910 and the Darby family built the two-story frame house in the 1920s. As a true general store, the business sold products ranging from hardware to food to yard supplies over the years. It has been closed for several decades and the building needs substantial renovation. M-NCPPC will stabilize the building, then look for a private partner to fully renovate and use both the store and house.

“We cannot overstate the importance of this site to preserving the rural and commercial heritage of Montgomery County,” stated Montgomery County Planning Board Chairman Derick P. Berlage.

Rachel Carson Conservation Park Extension, Olney, MD

In September 2003, M-NCPPC protected an important 50.6-acre Water Supply property, owned by John Carman and located between Sundown and Griffith Roads, for \$170,000. Covered by high quality mature forest, the property includes tributaries to the Hawlings River and is part of a larger forested block planned for addition to the Rachel Carson Conservation Park.

“To help assure the quality of our environment, this site is an example of the important natural resources and water supply resources protected through the Legacy Open Space program,” according to Chairman Berlage.

Serpentine Barrens, Potomac, MD

In July 2004, the Commission closed on the third installment of the Serpentine Barrens property in Potomac. Located on Piney Meetinghouse Road between Palatine Drive and Travilah Road, this 258-acre forested property provides for the protection of one of the most important natural areas in Montgomery County.

In December 2002, M-NCPPC entered into a contract to purchase the property from Miller and Smith at Quercus, L.L.C., for just over \$9,000,000 in five installments using Legacy Open Space funds approved by the Montgomery County Council. Both parties recently completed the third installment purchase for 50.2 acres at a cost of \$1,754,000, resulting in public ownership of about 200 acres of the 258-acre site. By July 2006, the two final installments will be completed. The property is being added to the County's park system as a conservation park. M-NCPPC staff will develop a management plan to address maintenance and management issues, conservation measures and appropriate public access.

Serpentine Barrens is the largest remaining block of forest in the County that sits on an outcrop of serpentinite bedrock. As a result of very thin soils and manganese rich soil characteristics, this bedrock restricts the growth of many of the typical tree and plant species in the County. The resulting ecological community on this soil is highly unique, containing at least 22 species of rare, threatened, endangered and watchlist plants. Conserving properties such as the Serpentine Barrens is critical to preserving the biodiversity of Montgomery County.

Legacy Open Space is a bold initiative proposed by the Planning Board and approved by the Montgomery County Council to conserve and steward land of exceptional value. The Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan identifies methods for protecting sensitive natural resources, water supply areas, heritage resources, greenways and trail connections, farmland and rural open space, and urban open space. Some resources may be purchased and added to the park system, while others may be protected through easement or public/private partnerships. Since the Legacy Open Space program's inception, a total of 2,800 acres of land throughout the County has been protected.

Support for the initial phase will come from County general obligation and park bonds. Additional future revenue is targeted to come from corporations, state and federal agencies, municipalities, and individual gifts to assure the land's availability for future generations. The Commission has also partnered with the Montgomery Parks Foundation to coordinate private donations to the program.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission encourages the involvement and participation of all individuals in its facilities and programs. For assistance with special needs, such as sign language interpretation, large print materials, listening devices, etc., contact the Community Relations Office, 301-495-4600, TTY 301-495-1331 or the Maryland Relay Service.