


AGENDA ITEM #8
October 16, 2018

SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

MEMORANDUM

October 12, 2018

TO: County Council

FROM: Marlene Michaelson, Executive Director 

SUBJECT: Semi-Annual Report of the Planning Board

PURPOSE: Review Planning Department and Department of Parks accomplishments and work program and provide input on work program.

The Semi-Annual Report of the Planning Board to the Council typically occurs in the spring and fall each year and is an opportunity for the Planning Board to present its proposed work program and brief the Council on major planning and parks issues before the Board. The Report is attached, and a color copy is available online at:

http://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2018_Fall_semiannual_web.pdf

As is typical of Semi-Annual Reports at the end of a Council term, the Report does not propose any significant change in workprogram. This report instead highlights the accomplishments of the 2 Departments over the past several years including:

- The opening or renovation of several parks and the Energized Public Spaces Master Plan (page 7- 9).
- The significant number of master plans adopted over the past 5 years (page 10-12).
- The completion of various housing studies and adopting of changes in housing policy and law (page 15).
- Work completed related to transportation and trails (page 16-19).
- How planning and excellent design enhances economic competitiveness (page 20-21).
- Improved management of park athletic fields (page 22-23).
- Efforts to engage broader and more diverse constituencies (page 24-25) and address Social Equity issues (page 26-27).
- Awards earned by the Departments (pages 29-30).

PLANNING DEPARTMENT WORKPROGRAM

The Semi-Annual Report lists the master plans in progress and proposed on page 13. The proposed schedule is virtually identical to the one adopted by the Council in May.

DATE FOR COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING OR REVIEW
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Master Plan/Study	May 2018 Approved	October
Bicycle Master Plan	July 2018	July 2018
MARC Rail Stations	January 2019	January 2019
Veirs Mill Rd Corridor Plan	February 2019	February 2019
Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen	April 2019	June 2019
Germantown Plan for Town Sector Zone	June 2019	June 2019
Shady Grove Sector Plan -- Minor Master Plan Amendment	October 2019	October 2019
Ashton Minor Master Plan Amendment	January 2020	January 2020
Roadway Functional Classification System	February 2020	February 2020
General Plan Update	2020	2020

The MARC Rail Stations and Viers Mill Road plans will be the first plans to be considered by the next Council. Additional plans will be added to the schedule in future Semi-Annual Reports.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PARKS + PLANNING
FALL 2018 SEMIANNUAL REPORT



About Us

The Montgomery County Planning Department and Department of Parks are dedicated to improving the quality of life by conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment for current and future generations while creating great communities. This goal is achieved through the master planning and development review process as well as protecting and interpreting Montgomery County's valuable natural and cultural resources, balancing demand for recreation with the need for conservation and providing clean, safe and accessible places.

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Letter From Our Chair

President Riemer and Members of the County Council:

This semiannual report highlights the achievements of the Parks and Planning Departments, and Planning Board to strengthen our economic competitiveness, improve our quality of life and make our communities more inclusive.

Over the past four years, the Council and Planning Board have collaborated on several innovative land use and transportation projects that are already promoting a healthier economy by providing additional housing, retail and employment opportunities in areas ready for reinvestment. Both the Purple Line and first bus rapid transit route are moving forward, and our plans have established a foundation for transit, bicycling and walking to play a larger role.

We have already seen results from these efforts. Marriott International is building new headquarters in downtown Bethesda and Montgomery County is a finalist for Amazon's HQ2. Fox 5 is relocating from the District of Columbia to a new office tower on top of the Bethesda Purple Line station. Progress is being made on our new headquarters in Wheaton and the bioscience-focused Viva White Oak community.

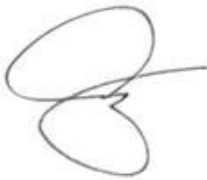
While these are promising developments, we must provide enough housing to meet the needs of residents across the income spectrum. As a result of the Planning Department's 2017 Rental Housing Study, the Council recently approved changes to the county's moderately priced dwelling unit program. Our Missing Middle Study will identify the challenges to providing diverse, affordable housing that bridges the gap between single-family homes and multi-unit buildings.

Our award-winning parks provide essential public services that sustain livable and healthy communities. They provide venues for physical activity, social gathering and contemplative experiences; while conserving our natural resources to provide habitat, clean air and clean water. They are a primary reason people choose to live, work, and play in Montgomery County. We continue to focus on delivering vibrant, walkable parks in our population centers as the county grows, expanding and improving our highly-used trail network, and improving the playability of our park and school athletic fields.

Both the Parks and Planning Departments have focused on improving outreach to diverse audiences and making sure that equity is central to our efforts. From Spanish language programs to online tools like the recently-launched MC React Map, and events like the upcoming White Flint Placemaking Festival, we have been tailoring outreach efforts to engage more residents in the planning process.

Montgomery County remains a model of good government and responsible stewardship, and we deeply appreciate this Council's commitment to serving the best interests of our residents. Thank you for your support over the past four years.

Respectfully Submitted,



Casey Anderson
Planning Board Chair







Energized Montgomery County

Montgomery Parks and Planning are the driving forces behind changing sprawling, auto-dependent suburbs into compact, mixed-use communities where residents can safely walk and bicycle. We are revitalizing and reimagining areas of the county with plans for new buildings and public spaces, and proposing new countywide infrastructure for bicycling, transit and roads.

Our capital improvements program focuses on efficiently providing both new and renovated parks that deliver in-demand amenities. Coupled with our park activation program that includes pop-up parks and new creative events, we are seeing increased visitation in our parks.

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The Energized Public Spaces Plan provides a comprehensive approach to how and where we create parks and public spaces in the parts of the county where more people live and work.

Mike Riley

Director of Parks

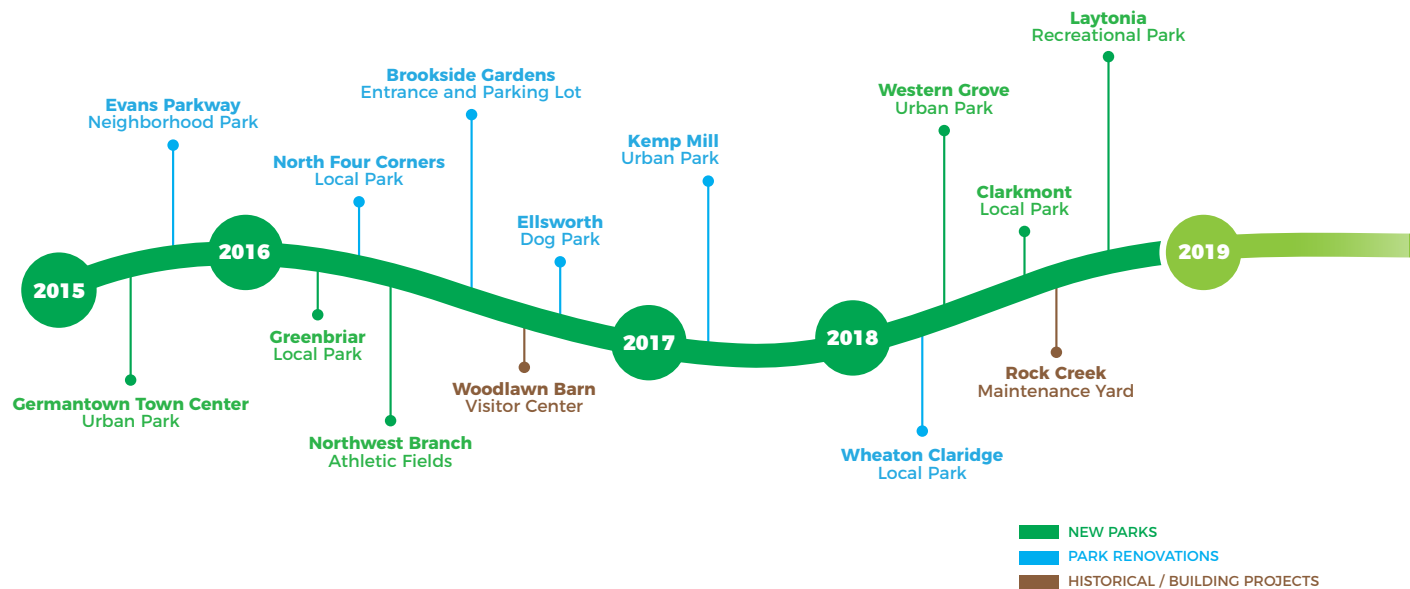




Over the past four years, Montgomery Parks has continued to expand to meet the needs of the growing and diversifying population of Montgomery County. We've acquired nearly 1,000 acres of new parkland—250 were at no cost and 674 acres were purchased using State Program Open Space, County Legacy Open Space and other funding sources.

Ongoing park improvements projects and new park construction projects continue to provide environmental benefits, neighborhood connections and recreational opportunities. These new and renovated parks increase property values of surrounding neighborhoods.

In spring 2018, we launched the Park Refresher program to renovate more parks in a shorter amount of time and at less cost. This is possible because the program combines design steps, uses on-call contractors and in-house trade staff, and establishes an annual funding pool for multiple projects. By improving existing facilities, trails, playgrounds, fields, courts and buildings, we enhance the park users' experiences and extend the life-span of these facilities.





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We have taken the county from something of a suburban mindset where the car was king and emphasized the new suburbanism. We are taking the county from parking lots to places.

Gwen Wright
Planning Director

Major Planning Department Plans and Policies Approved Since 2014	
Clarksburg Ten Mile Creek Limited Master Plan	2014
White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan	2014
Rewrite of Zoning Ordinance	2014
Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment	2015
Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment	2015
Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan	2015
Montgomery Village Master Plan	2015
Westbard Sector Plan	2016
Update to Subdivision Staging Policy	2016
Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan	2017
Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan	2017
White Flint 2 Sector Plan	2017
Rock Spring Master Plan	2017
Grosvenor-Strathmore Minor Master Plan	2017
Update to Suidivision Regulations	2017
Technical Update to Master Plan of Highways and Transitways	2018
Revision of Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Legislation	2018

Montgomery Planning has worked over the past four years to improve the lives of county residents through its plans and policies. Since 2013, more than a dozen master and sector plans have been approved for communities in nearly every part of the county. Key policies, including the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, have been updated to keep pace with growth and help transform once sprawling suburbs into compact, mixed-use and walkable neighborhoods.

Planning staff has collaborated with Montgomery Parks on its Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan to ensure parks and open areas are part of the county's most populated communities. New guidelines have been issued for recreational facilities and amenities in private developments that appeal to teens and seniors, as well as to young children and adults.

All our planning efforts rely on public participation to steer the process. In recent years, Montgomery Planning has broadened its outreach to include digital, interactive maps and surveys, Spanish language translations and graphic recordings by artists at community meetings, as well as social media and videos. These continuing engagement strategies are reaching more residents and stakeholders, and garnering awards for our innovative outreach tools.





6000 Executive Boulevard



7272 Wisconsin Avenue

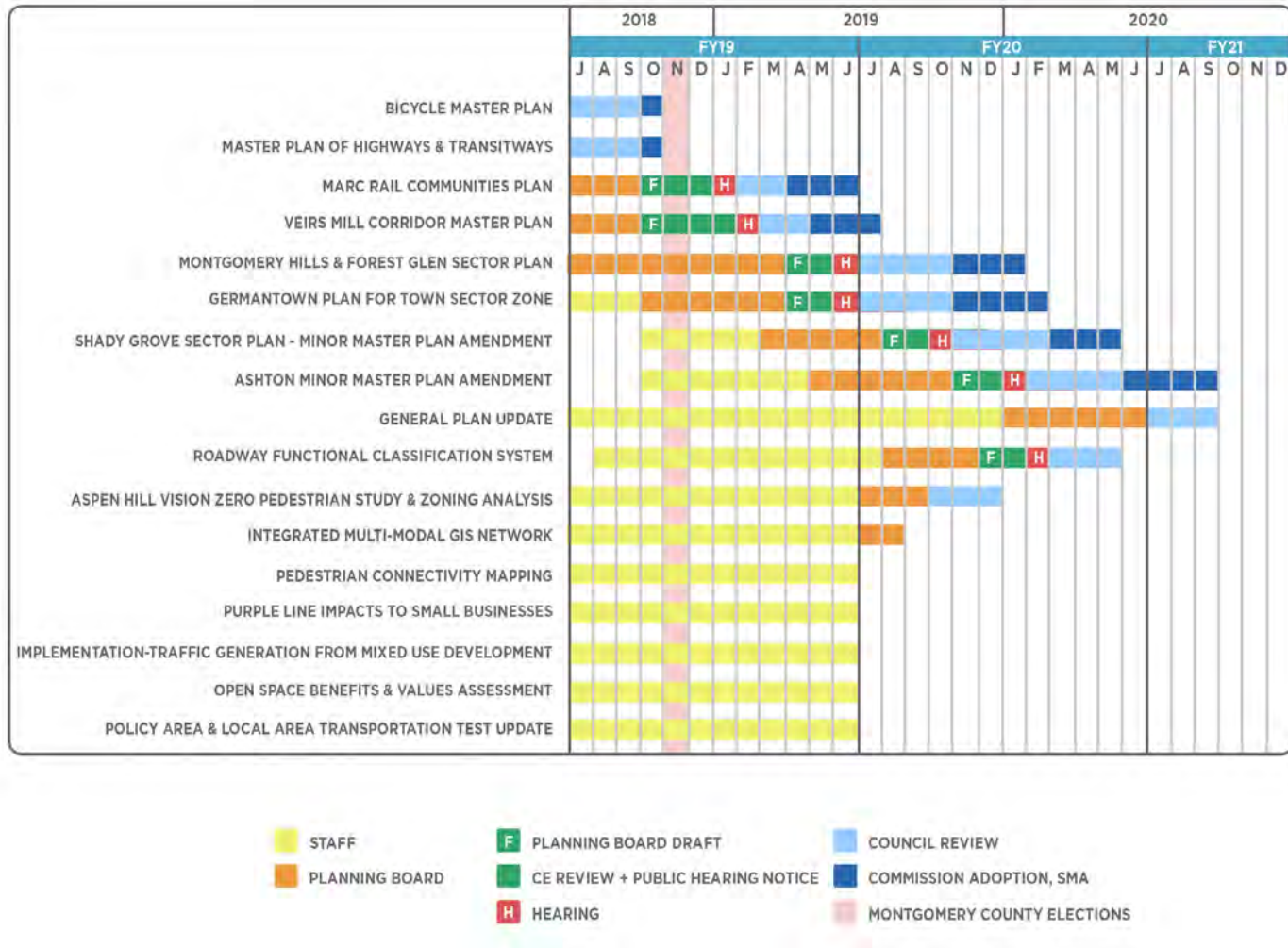


Chevy Chase Lake



Pop-up at Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Station

FY19 Adopted Master Plans and Major Projects Schedule







Housing

Montgomery County is expected to become home to approximately 208,000 more residents by 2045. The challenge is to build enough housing to meet the growing needs across the affordability spectrum. Montgomery Parks and Planning have looked at innovative ways to create and support increasing the supply and diversifying the housing stock in the county. They have recommended and supported policies to promote a higher percentage of moderately priced dwelling units within residential developments and provide adequate parks and infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing population.

The Rental Housing Study, completed in 2017, was a comprehensive analysis that identified Montgomery County's rental housing issues and needs. Through recommendations aimed at increasing the availability of affordable rental housing, the study influenced recent legislative changes to the county's moderately priced dwelling unit program.

Recognizing the importance of a diverse housing supply, the Missing Middle Housing Study provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges to providing housing like courtyard dwellings and smaller apartments that can help transition between multi-unit residential development and neighborhoods of single-family homes.

The Study of Housing for Older Adults was undertaken in response to the county's growing number of residents aged 55 and older, and the unique housing challenges faced by this population. The study reveals the characteristics of the senior population, and the current and future demand for senior housing across the county.

Through the master planning process, the production of new housing is balanced with the preservation of existing market-rate affordable housing. The introduction of new supply meets the needs of the growing population while also creating income-controlled units through the county's moderately priced dwelling unit program. Preservation allows for the continued support of existing communities with affordable housing.



Montgomery County is expected to become home to approximately 208,000 more residents by 2045.

Transportation and Trails

An efficient transportation network is essential for mobility and making the economic and social connections that are vital to the county. Our roads and transit systems are complicated as they weave through urban, suburban and rural areas of the county. Montgomery Parks and Planning rely on a data-driven approach to solving traffic problems while balancing safety for all modes of transportation.

Montgomery County's adoption of a Vision Zero policy to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and injuries by 2030 is now a priority for our plans. Four projects have a strong focus on preventing severe traffic injuries or fatalities, including the Bicycle Master Plan, Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan, Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan and Aspen Hill Vision Zero Study.

In 2016, the Planning Board approved a new countywide Park Trails

Plan. The plan recommends a new framework called "Loops and Links" that aims to deliver new and improved trails in close proximity to areas of highest population. It recommends expanding the network with trails that will be multi-use, achievable and sustainable.

Improvements to trail / roadway crossings are part of the Parks Department's efforts to achieve Vision Zero. Construction of 14 crossings has been completed this year and 21 more crossings are slated for improvements in 2018. The Parks Department created an inter-agency work group to focus particularly on safety improvements on the Matthew Henson Trail at its crossing with Veirs Mill Road.

Improvements include upgraded pavement markings, traffic signage and advanced warning devices. Intersections have been prioritized based on factors such as traffic

counts, speed limits and number of lanes.

An east-to-west light rail route connecting the down-county suburbs has been on the books since 1986. Montgomery Parks and Planning are pleased that construction for the Purple Line is well underway for the 16-mile east-west light rail line connecting Bethesda to New Carrollton in Prince George's County. The Purple Line is a critically important component of infrastructure for the 21st century and will allow the county to remain economically competitive in the region.

Several master and sector plans recommend improvements and development along the alignment, including the Bethesda Downtown Plan, Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan Amendment, Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan, Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan and Long Branch Sector Plan.

About the Vision Zero Initiative

The Montgomery County Council passed a resolution adopting Vision Zero in 2016 and committed to eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries by 2030. To achieve this goal, Montgomery County developed a Vision Zero Action Plan with specific activities and deadlines for implementation. All departments and divisions in the county have a responsibility to uphold this policy in their projects and practices, including the Montgomery County Planning Department, which is integrating Vision Zero into master plans.





Surveys continue to point to the park trail network as one its most used and desired park facilities. Our trails promote physical fitness, connect our communities and provide access to nature.



The Bicycle Master Plan is using a data-driven, forward-thinking approach in recommending a vision for Montgomery County as a world-class bicycling community, where people in all areas of the county have access to a comfortable, safe and connected bicycle network, and where bicycling is a viable transportation option that improves our quality of life. This plan places safety of all modes of transportation as a priority in subscribing to Vision Zero principles.

The approval of the first bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor connecting Silver Spring to Burtonsville along US Route 29 was passed by the Planning Board, July 2018. This important transit project will provide

substantial benefits to existing and new transit riders along the US 29 corridor and is one step closer towards the creation of Montgomery County's planned bus rapid transit network. Because BRT contains features similar to a light rail or Metro system, it is more reliable, convenient and faster than other bus services. With the right features, BRT can avoid the causes of delay that slow local bus services.

Montgomery County has 249 miles of trails for walking, hiking and bicycling. Over the past four years, sustainable, multi-use, unpaved trails have been introduced into the system to improve connectivity to park facilities and increase safety at trail crossings. The trail network

continues to expand through low-cost initiatives such as in-house design and construction, and volunteer-based inspections, maintenance and repairs.

The groundbreaking Pepco Trail is a partnership between Montgomery Parks, Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts and PEPCO/Exelon Corp. When opened this fall, the initial 6-mile trail segment will use the electric utility right-of-way to connect South Germantown Recreational Park with the Muddy Branch Stream Valley Park in North Potomac.



Economic Competitiveness

Employers want to be in Montgomery County because of the high quality of life, housing options, world-class parks and open spaces, and proximity to transit. Parks and Planning are the stewards of the natural and built environments, and now are raising the bar for design excellence in our buildings and parks through regulatory cases and new initiatives.

Recognized as the only county to be selected in the second round of finalists for Amazon's HQ2 project, Montgomery County is poised to welcome a signature business headquarters. We have the planning and parks infrastructure to handle an employer of up to 20,000 employees thanks to our forward-thinking and flexible zoning code and master planning efforts. The business

climate is improving in Montgomery County and making Amazon's HQ2 short list proves this.

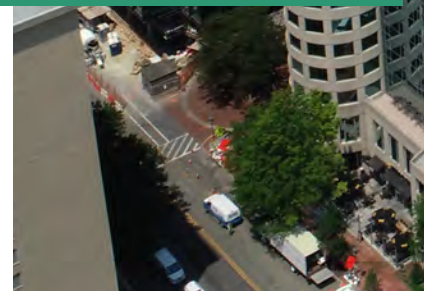
Excellent design makes a difference. It inspires, reflects our cultural health and builds a competitive advantage in our region. Design excellence is increasingly important as available land for development in the county is shrinking and priorities for excellent public spaces have become more acute. Creating and enhancing attractive, safe and sustainable places to live work and play are more important than ever for attracting the best and brightest to our county – residents, businesses and visitors. To raise the quality of design throughout the county, the Montgomery County Planning Department launched a comprehensive Design Excellence (DesignX)

initiative focused on the themes of inspiration, collaboration and clarity.

As a result, the development community is bringing their A-game to design striking and sustainable buildings and open spaces. In Bethesda alone, 2.5 million square feet of nonresidential buildings have been proposed. The Bethesda Design Advisory Panel is a model of how citizens, architects and urban design enthusiasts can have a major impact on the look and feel of future buildings. Projects such as the Marriott headquarters, the site of the former Apex building, Pike & Rose II, Elizabeth Square, Wheaton HQ and the site of the former police station building in Bethesda are elevating the quality of design.



Montgomery County was named one of the 20 finalists for Amazon's second headquarters.







Parks Athletic Fields



512 Fields



750 Acres of Playing Surface



1 App

Parks' Athletic Field Showcase highlights the multiple ways to improve the quality of our athletic fields. Demonstrations highlight our state-of-the-art equipment and how we manage and maintain athletic fields.

Moving forward, the athletic field team is finalizing a plan to improve playing surfaces using collector data, community input and field locations. The focus is on new construction projects, renovations of infields and rectangles, as well as training for staff and the community.

Montgomery Parks maintains 512 athletic fields covering more than 750 acres of playing surfaces that attract residents and visitors from around the region. Our ongoing partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has allowed us to grow our athletic field inventory and, to date, we currently maintain 206 MCPS fields.

To manage the growth of our program, in 2015, Parks centralized operations and assigned a dedicated program manager to focus on improving park and school athletic fields. We streamlined resources so additional investments could be made for equipment, renovations and maintenance. This process ensures our fields are maintained,

designed and constructed to increase utilization, extend their life and reduce renovations.

Technology is helping Parks to maintain a competitive edge in athletic fields operations. A GIS-based tool to assess baseline conditions of fields allows us to gauge the impact of investment in renovation and maintenance. With this tool, we collected data on 720 parks and MCPS fields as well as more than 2,600 associated amenities, such as goals, backstops and players benches. Use of this data helps focus our efforts where they are most needed and will allow the greatest improvement for the amount spent and prioritizes improvements, playability and safety.

Over the last two years, we have rededicated a total of \$1 million in user fees into improving quality of school fields. In FY18, Parks renovated 26 fields to improve their playability and safety. The Parks' Athletic Field Showcase highlights the multiple ways we work to ensure the high quality of our athletic fields. Demonstrations highlight our state-of-the-art equipment methods used to improve the quality of our athletic fields.

Moving forward, the athletic field team is finalizing a plan to improve playing surfaces using collector data, community input and field locations. Our focus is on new construction projects, renovations of infields and rectangles, as well as training for staff and community.

Outreach and Engagement

Parks and Planning envision communities and parks for the residents of Montgomery County and rely on the public to give us feedback on what is working and what is not. It is our duty to make sure that all residents have an opportunity to get involved and voice their concerns. Using strategic communications has evolved over the years to engage broader and more diverse constituencies.



Interactive Comment Maps

Interactive comment maps give residents the opportunity to identify areas of concern inside and comment on them while interacting with their community. Some maps have the capability to receive feedback via text message.



Translation Services

In addition to having fully translatable websites, Parks and Planning offer translation services for meetings and other official department business.



Websites and Blog

Community members can view Parks and Planning websites as well as check out The Third Place blog posts about industry topics, written by staff. In 2016, the Parks, Planning and Planning Board websites were redesigned to be more user-friendly and ADA-compliant.



Graphic Recording Artists

This process is a new way to engage audiences at public meetings. A graphic recording artist takes comments from community members and transforms them into an unique drawing.





Social Equity

Montgomery Parks and Planning strive to ensure their programs and plans are equally accessible to all people regardless of income level, ethnicity, gender, ability or age. Montgomery Parks builds, maintains and operates parks and open spaces that are safe and accessible to be enjoyed by the public and play a central role in creating community. In 2018, courtesy of the Marye Wells-Harley Scholarship Program, 15 children were sent to summer camp; their parents could not afford to send them otherwise. Over the past four years, the Parks Program Access Office has improved access to our programming by providing direct and indirect services for 332 people and Parks has provided on-the-job training to 11 students with special abilities.

Both Montgomery Parks and Planning continue to ensure internship opportunities for high school and college students through ongoing partnerships with educational institutions, public agencies and programs. We have recently begun offering translation services for our public outreach efforts, such as providing materials in Spanish and Chinese. Parks and Planning are building on this effort to provide translation services in other languages moving forward.

In addition, Montgomery Planning seeks to provide equitable opportunities for all county residents through the planning process and land use policies. This effort includes plan recommendations that are equitable to residents across the income spectrum with respect to housing, transportation, environment and zoning. It means providing accessible and inviting engagement for historically underserved communities, so their voices can be heard as part of the planning process. The Bicycle Master Plan, Vision Zero plans and projects, Rental Housing Study, Recreation Guidelines, Retail Trends Study, Employment Trends Study, General Plan Update and all Montgomery Planning events represent initiatives that set social equity as a high priority.







Parks Awards

2015

- National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Gold Medal-The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission was honored with its unprecedented sixth Gold Medal

2016

Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park:

- Wintergreen Award for Excellence in Green Building
- Neighborhood Project Category from the United States Green Building Council, Maryland Chapter
- Planning and Design with Environmental Protection in Mind Award

2017

- Recreation and Parks Association National Recognition Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies 2017 Engineering Excellence Awards competition for Brookside Gardens Garden Gateway project

2018

- Planning Department Design Excellence Award in Landscape Architecture for the Little Bennett Regional Park Day Use Area
- Evans Parkway Neighborhood Park was honored with a Design Excellence Jury Citation in the Landscapes and Open Space category
- Woodlawn Museum at Woodlawn Manor Cultural Park received a Jury Citation in the Building and Sites category

Planning Awards

2015

- Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects Kea Medal – architectural historian Clare Lise Kelly
- Maryland Historical Trust Award for the Montgomery Modern initiative by the Historic Preservation Office
- American Planning Association/National Association of County Planners Award of Excellence for Pike and Rose

2016

- Washington Publishers Design Award for the Montgomery Modern book
- National Capital Area Chapter of the American Planning Association Outstanding Tool Award for the Bicycle Master Plan Bicycle Stress Map

2017

- Potomac Valley AIA Kea Medal – Planning Director Gwen Wright
- American Planning Association Gold Achievement Award in Transportation Planning for the Bicycle Master Plan Bicycle Stress Map.
- American Planning Association Planning Landmark Award for the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve





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