



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

March 21, 2013

Evan Glass
Chair, Silver Spring Advisory Board

Dear Mr. Glass,

Thank you for your letter from the Silver Spring Advisory Board outlining the desire of Silver Spring residents for additional open, green spaces in the Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD). I especially appreciate that the Board went beyond articulating views to the County Executive and County Council, and proposed constructive and actionable recommendations.

As a popular arts and entertainment destination, we must balance the urban redevelopment of Silver Spring with the creation of functional green spaces for community building and recreation. The 2010 Silver Spring CBD Green Space Guidelines state that while there are public spaces developed as part of optional method project requirements, these spaces are often perceived not as public space, but as the building's private front yard or entryway. As you know from the joint meeting I held with District of Columbia Ward 4 Councilmember Muriel Bowser, the amount of usable green space in Silver Spring is also a concern for residents on the other side of Eastern Avenue.

The Green Space Guidelines provide a framework for identifying and developing large green open spaces in accordance with the vision of the 2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan. These guidelines, which were developed with the input of property owners, residents, institutions, public interest groups, and advisory bodies, recommended specific priority sites, including: Parking Lot 3 in Fenton Village; the Giant Food parking lot; land surrounding the existing Progress Place in the Ripley District; the stream valley at Falklands Chase; and the land between Kennett Street and MD 410. I support these priority locations, and will continue to look for innovative ways to utilize existing spaces, including Jesup Blair Park, and potential future spaces.

Concerned about the usefulness of so-called “pocket parks” and the need for dog parks in urbanized areas, I wrote to the Planning Board Chair in June 2012 regarding the need for expansion of off-leash exercise areas for dogs, or dog parks, in the Montgomery County Parks System. During the Planning Board’s worksession on the 2012 PROS Plan, they also heard testimony from Silver Spring residents regarding dog parks. These residents articulated that there is a need for more dog parks in urban areas, such as Silver Spring, and less in regional parks. In August 2012, I wrote to the Chair of the Planning, Housing & Economic Development (PHED) Committee to both increase dog parks using existing, under-utilized parks and to discuss the inclusion of dog parks in future master/sector plans that are anticipated to have a high level of density.

I spearheaded the community garden initiative in 2008 to bring community gardens to the County’s under-utilized green spaces and this program continues to be one of my top priorities. In partnership with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission’s (M-NCPPC) Department of Parks, this initiative has grown significantly. The first community garden opened in May 2009 at Sligo Mill Overlook, and now the County has ten community garden sites, including one on King Street in the CBD.

The 2012 Park Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, which estimates the future needs for park and recreation facilities to meet future needs, states that the main challenge is to put “the ‘right parks’ in the ‘right places.’” It states that these spaces should serve as “a focal point of community life” and be “comfortable, attractive, easily accessible, and provide a range of experiences.” The Board is correct in stating that there are several entities involved in achieving these goals through acquiring open space, approving development plans, and making policy. Due to the multijurisdictional nature of these issues, I will share the Board’s recommendations to maximize and better utilize green space in Silver Spring and other urban areas with the Chair of the Planning Board, Interim Planning Director, Director of Parks, and the Chair of the Council’s PHED Committee.

Further, I will discuss with the PHED Chair the potential legislative measures outlined in the Board’s recommendations, and request that they be addressed at an upcoming PHED Committee meeting.

I look forward to working with the Board on this issue. Thank you again for your continuing interest and advocacy. Please feel free to continue contact my office at 240-777-7960 with any further questions and/or concerns.

Sincerely,



Valerie Ervin
Councilmember – District 5

c: Councilmembers
Françoise Carrier, Chairman, M-NCPPC Planning Board
Mary Bradford, Director, M-NCPPC Department of Parks
Rose Krasnow, Interim Planning Director, M-NCPPC
Robert Kronenberg, Planning Area 1 Chief, M-NCPPC
Marlene Michaelson, Council Staff
Reemberto Rodriguez, Director, Silver Spring Regional Service Center
Ernest Bland, Chair, Silver Spring Urban District