Little Bennett Regional Park is located in northern Montgomery County in Clarksburg, Maryland, about 30 miles northwest of Washington, DC.

With over 3,600 acres, Little Bennett Regional Park is the largest park in the county park system.

Located on the western fringe of Little Bennett Regional Park, the 65 acre site was designated as a ‘gateway’ area to welcome people and provide them with an overview of the park’s cultural and ecological heritage.
The western periphery sits at the ridgeline and descends 80 feet east to Sopers Branch. The site is subdivided into three areas by drainage valley fingers.

Rolling hills, open meadow with valley folds — typical of Maryland’s Piedmont region, characterize the site.
The dichotomy between man and nature is evident as the land transitions from road to rural homestead, meadow to forest. The site supports various vegetation — meadows, woods and wetland and is shared by abundant wildlife and human inhabitants.
The plan invites park visitors to probe into the park interior via recreation and interpretation programs. The experience transitions from total immersion in the meadow to controlled access on boardwalks in the western stream valley.
Vision

The plan brings to life the story of Montgomery County’s Piedmont region—a familiar and beloved landscape.

While protecting the landscape and its diverse habitats, the plan engages visitors with the required program of recreation and interpretation.

The simple aesthetic of the rural meadow is translated into a memorable landscape, perpetuating its cultural value.
Participation

The plan engages the site’s cultural gradient and ecological process through total participation. Visitors are encouraged to experience the land at the most personal level.
The plan proposes a comprehensive landscape management plan to maintain the meadow and surrounding ecotones. Conservation strategies include mowing and burning for meadow area; managed succession for hedgerow expansion; and supplemental planting of native species at the program area.
Stormwater Management

Seven Sycamore rings are strategically located along Meadow Drive to mitigate stormwater runoff.

Each ring consists of a 40' diameter circular bio-retention planting area with Sycamore trees planted in an 80' diameter concentric circle.

Seemingly identical, each Sycamore ring will be designed to suit its specific topography and stormwater management goals.

Functional and aesthetic — Sycamore trees historically identify stream valleys. Now, these designed concentric bioretention areas intend to provoke interest in the water process — a visual connection to the hydraulics of the stream valley.
Sustainability

The plan results in substantial reductions in the development footprint when compared to the 2007 master plan ‘gateway’ concept. Although the plan challenged conventional approaches to development, it was well-supported and approved in 2011. First phase implementation is currently under way.

Agency Coordination & Approvals
- Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services
- M-NCPPC Department of Planning / Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Maryland State Highway Administration, Access Management Division
- Potomac Electric and Power Company
- Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County

Community Outreach
- Friends of Little Bennett
- Clarksburg Civic Associations
- Up-county Recreation Advisory Board

Vision 2030
The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan

Process

Master Plan
1994
1994 Clarksburg Master Plan & Hyattstown Special Study Area
2007 Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan
2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan

Timeline
1994
2005
2007

Agenda Coordination and Approvals

Park Facility Planning
2009
2010
2011

Schematic Design
Proposed Concept

Consultant Team

Funding Determination by Montgomery County Council
Capital Improvement Program

Detail Design & Construction (Phase 1)
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017

Construction
2018
Entry

Park entrances will be identified using an Indian way finding approach — calling out distinctive natural features as road markers.

The outstanding white bark of Sycamore trees will be used to identify these two points of arrival.

White vertical markers will be located along the road frontage, arranged in a progressive pattern to indicate entry, and refer to the distinct bark of Sycamore trees.

Sycamore trees planted around circular bio-retention areas will provide a visual reference for the entry — and the trees’ exfoliating bark and grand branch display will offer timeless character.
Underlook

Surrounded by panoramic views, a small visitor facility/multi-purpose pavilion nestles into a high round knoll. The 2,000 square feet concrete, steel and wood structure is intended for year-round usage, staffed or unstaffed, providing a flexible indoor/outdoor space for visitors.

Humbly dwelling on the land, the building preserves the topography of the meadow knoll.

A grassy amphitheater extends the outdoor classroom.

Exterior Roof Plan

Interior Seating Plan

for Lectures

for Screen

Classroom Plan

Classroom Pavilion
Playscape

The plan provides nature based play for all ages. The Playscape is an organic sculpture integrated with the land. It is a hub for making connections to interpretation boardwalks, learning alcoves, the sledding hill, amphitheaters and outdoor classrooms.

Located between two stream buffers, the design considers the continuous sightlines along meadow edge and stream habitat.

Tucked into the landscape a transparent structure rises from the meadow revealing steps, ramps and platforms with organic limbs shooting back downward.

Pipe down, tubewalk and webbing

Berms, burrows, and pop-ups
Nature-based Recreation

The trail system provides safe access to points of interest and connects visitors to the meadow and forest edges. The plan offers multiple picnic opportunities in various settings and makes use of the site topography for sledding activity.

- Park House Picnic
- Sound Wall
- Hay Play
- Sledding Hill
- Picnic Shelter
- Overlook
- Trail System

Hay bales left on site from seasonal mowing get stacked for a sound wall at the Park House picnic area, or become vehicles for creative hay play.

Picnic shelter and overlook
Interpretation

Dry and wet meadows, the successional forest on the edge, on site material recycling, and wildlife provide many environmental education opportunities. The ever-changing site conditions enrich the learning experience year round.

* Birdhouse Point
* Bluebird Trail
* Monarch Butterfly Station
* Insect Hotel
* Wetlands Overlook
* Interpretive Boardwalk
* Public Art

Access is made possible with smart design and material choices — engaging with nature without disturbing.