A FORWARD-THINKING PARK
Woodside Urban Park Facility Plan

The plan to revitalize Woodside Urban Park supports urban connectivity and promotes a pedestrian-friendly “gateway” to the re-emergent central business district of Silver Spring. A flexible framework is combined with strong green infrastructure to create an ecologically smart and aesthetically pleasing park experience.

The landscape architect led a team of consultants and collaborated with park staff, regulatory agencies, and the community throughout the design process. The plan received approval from the Montgomery County Planning Board in 2011 and is included in the park’s Capital Improvements Program for final design and construction.

The renovation of the area’s largest open green space has been embraced by the community. This aging park is to be transformed into a green hub for recreation, leisure and cultural activates. Connections between people and place will be enhanced by an improved streetscape, safer pathways and a renewed ecosystem.

The plan embraces the challenge of overriding critical root zones, of significant grade changes, and of absent on-site stormwater management. It advocates sustainability in all aspects of design, construction, future operation and management. The renewed park will promote a healthy urban life style, local stewardship and provide educational opportunities for the exploration of water, energy, food and biodiversity.
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The 2.62 acre urban park was originally built in the late 1970s. It is situated prominently at the edge of a residential community and marks the northern entrance to Silver Spring’s central business district. The existing park includes many standard park amenities and has served the community well over the years, but it suffers from a complicated hardscape, fragmented program areas and overall deteriorating conditions.

The facility plan takes on the area’s Master Plan vision of “a green downtown, civic downtown and pedestrian friendly downtown” — transforming the park into a gateway to the central business district, a green amenity to the surrounding community and a green hub for recreation and leisure use. The plan envisions an urban park that is ecologically sound, culturally significant and aesthetically pleasing. People of all ages will have more ways to experience the park, more places to play, greener and safer routes to stroll, and new grounds to garden.

The plan calls for an integrated design approach to create an upgraded environment that supports long-term revitalization, that attracts people at all times and that will promote a healthy urban lifestyle. The planning process involved an internal team of stakeholders, county representatives, regulatory agencies as well as community members. The preferred concept included a consolidated central open space, walking trail, a community garden, a rain garden and water features, and a streetscape with improved visibility. The revitalization of Woodside Urban Park can be best described by five themes:

**Urban Connectivity**: The park connects residents with the central business district and with adjoining communities. A clear path network ties all program activities together and includes a prominent gateway terrace, improved crosswalks, accessible entrances, a bus shelter and bike racks.

**Experiential Complexity**: The plan offers diverse recreational experiences and leisure opportunities for all ages: playing, running, strolling, picnicking, resting, people-watching and gardening. The playscape engages children of different age groups. The senior play area promotes an active and healthy life style. The community garden and rain garden offer opportunities for environmental stewardship, habitat enhancement, horticulture and education.

**Environmental Sustainability**: The park maximizes ‘green’ in all aspects. Working with the existing site hydrology, rain water will be harvested, retained, cleansed and reused through a chain of rain gardens, runnels, infiltration beds and water tanks. To protect existing mature trees, a comprehensive tree preservation plan was developed and will guide design, future construction and long-term tree care. Soil rejuvenation and management has been carefully studied and well budgeted. Vegetation is enhanced with low maintenance plants and groundcovers and urban habitat is improved with a balanced plant and insect community. The plan also recommends recycling on-site stone materials for the hardscape features.

**Economic Efficiency**: The plan advocates flexible program space and multi-purpose design.

Stormwater management facilities provide aesthetic amenities. Education and environmental stewardship is embedded within play. The physical framework of the park is designed to maintain unobstructed views for visual surveillance, while a smart lighting system which is responsive to user presence, activity, and time helps to provide safe passage through the park at dark.

The plan explores financial strategies to support future funding and maintenance of the park. The plan recommends: a seasonal concession for revenue generation; corporate sponsorship for green product demonstrations; community stewardship for cultivating volunteers; and business partnerships for an optional method of funding development in the business district.

**Cultural Vibrancy**: Sustaining an urban park requires developing a constituency of dedicated park users and stewards. The park space is designed to promote a sense of community and build personal bonds to the place. Activities are layered and linked to encourage social interaction. People of all age groups can enjoy the park — it is a desirable place to meet people, share ideas, and observe activities.

The renewed Woodside Urban Park is a forward thinking park for future generations.
This project involves the renovation of an aging urban park located in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Woodside Urban Park is situated prominently at the edge of a residential community with major transportation routes in close proximity, and it marks the northern entrance to the area’s Central Business District.

Although it has served the community well over the years, the park suffers from a complicated hardscape, fragmented program areas and overall deteriorating conditions.
Significant grade changes, disjointed circulation and absent on-site stormwater management informed objectives for the park renovation.

Program development would promote urban connectivity, on-site stormwater treatment and a healthy urban ecosystem.
An upgraded landscape that supports long-term revitalization — that fosters positive connections between people, place and nature.

Concepts of urban connectivity, experiential complexity, environmental sustainability, economic efficiency and cultural vibrancy evolved as an organizing structure for an integrated design approach. These themes inform the roles individual design features take on.
Proposed Plan

A forward-thinking park for future generations; a cohesive, flexible framework that supports recreational needs and cultural activities.

The concept envisions a 21st century urban park that strengthens the community and contributes to the urban ecosystem; a green infrastructure that supports the re-emergent economy — an urban park that is smart, coherent and pleasing.
Connectivity

Woodside Urban Park serves as a green hub for outdoor activities and a social connection point for adjoining communities.

An improved streetscape, a safer crosswalk and a visible, gateway entrance to the park promote strong connections to the central business district. Entering the park or leaving, there is a synergy between people and space. Recreation and social settings are integrated throughout the path network.
Experience

The park is an open environment — a collage of people, movement and activity — available for momentary individual ownership.

Social connections and experiences are choreographed within park spaces — where visitors share common ground and can choose to engage in active or passive recreation.
Experience – Play

The playscape at Woodside is integrated throughout multiple settings. Experiences are designed for all ages and abilities.

Designated play spaces and a variety of play structures will stimulate children to explore, be curious and invent games. They will participate in their own free-form, relevant play experience. Associated play areas overlap and extend throughout the park.
Sustainability

Designed as a living system, strategies were explored to manipulate the active elements of water, soil and vegetation.

Design solutions include ways to ecologically manage stormwater, amplify carbon sequestration, reintroduce native plants, restore biodiversity, cool air temperature and alleviate urban heat island effect, as well as restore soil, prevent erosion and filter noise and air pollutants.
Woodside Urban Park takes advantage of stormwater runoff and aims to integrate water ecologically, aesthetically and programmatically.

The process of retention, conveyance, and filtration is purposely revealed to promote public awareness and interest. Water features become focal points and amenities for park visitors.
The site's mature trees are a valued asset. Soil compaction, erosion and a deficiency of nutrients were apparent in the park.

A comprehensive tree preservation plan was developed to guide design, future construction and long term tree care.

Comprehensive soil testing and a geotechnical investigation ensured a thorough understanding of existing soil conditions. BMPs were included in the plan's approach to soil management.
Sustainability — Vegetation and Habitat

The renewed park environment will promote a healthy urban ecosystem and have a focus on plant communities that respond to existing site conditions and environmental context.

1 Woods
2 Groundcover
3 Native Plants
4 Insect House
5 Demonstration Garden
6 Community Garden
7 Rain Garden

Simple masses of herbaceous groundcover will reduce the required park maintenance and contribute to nutrient and water conservation, habitat enhancement and erosion control. Renovation of the park is the opportunity to bring back missing layers of the ecosystem.
Efficiency

The park is designed to be a cohesive system of functionality and operation. Design features fulfill multiple program requirements — and existing aspects of the park are adapted for maximum usage.

Sustained public interest and funding will be needed to future-proof the park — economic efficiency is explored through the prospect of seasonal revenue, enterprise opportunities, development incentives and community adoption.
A nocturnal identity for Woodside is explored through strategic use of general and accent illumination.

Efficiency — Lighting

Lighting responds visibly to stimuli such as user presence, activity, and time.

1. Photovoltaics
2. Color
3. Hierarchy of paths
4. Limited use of poles
5. Furniture integrated lighting elements
Vitality

Sustaining an urban park requires developing a constituency of dedicated park users, neighbors, and stewards.

The park space is designed to promote a sense of community and encourage personal bonds to the place. Activities are layered throughout and linked responding to the needs of a diverse range of users. It is a desirable place to meet people, share ideas and observe activities.
The planning process involved an internal team of stakeholders, county representatives, regulatory agencies as well as community members.

**Process**

**Agency Coordination & Approvals**

**Vision 2030**
The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan

**Community Outreach**
- Neighbors
- Civic Associations
- Chamber of Commerce

**Volunteer Project**
Xeriscape Demonstration Garden

**M-NCPPC Montgomery County Department of Parks**
- Park Development
- Facility Management
- Horticulture & Arboriculture
- Environmental Engineering
- Natural & Cultural Resource Stewardship
- Maintenance & Operations
- Park Police

**Consultant Team**
- Landscape Architecture
- Site Engineering
- Playscape Design
- Tree Preservation
- Soil Science & Engineering
- Lighting Design
- Graphic & 3D Modeling

**Park Facility Planning**

2000
- Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan
- Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan
- Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan

2005
- North and West Silver Spring Master Plan

2009
- Park Facility Planning

2010
- M-NCPPC Montgomery County Department of Parks
- Consultant Team

2011
- Schematic Design

2012
- Proposed Concept

2015
- Detail Design

2018
- Construction

Montgomery Planning Board Approval

Funding Determination by Montgomery County Council

Capital Improvement Program