Concept Plan Review Process for Project on Parkland

Any project proposed that directly impacts parkland by external government agencies, public utilities, non-profits, private developers, etc. must complete the Concept Plan Review Process prior to applying for a Park Construction Permit. The Concept Plan Review Process evaluates whether projects proposed on Parkland align with Montgomery County Parks’ Mission, Vision, and Values to steward natural and cultural resources, further recreational amenities, while abiding by all applicable local, state, and federal policies.

Through this process, Park Staff will work with the applicant to understand the scope of the work, determine if the impacts to parkland are avoidable or can be minimized, and if not, what mitigation or compensation will be required for the impacts. The Policy for Parks (2017 Board adopted PROS Master Plan Update) outlines the avoid, minimize, mitigate, compensate approach and where applicable, defines how non-park-use of park property is not permitted unless the Montgomery County Planning Board deems it to be in public interest.

According to Maryland State law (MD Land Use Code ANN. 20-301 through 305), all federal, state, and local governments and public utilities are required to submit proposed projects in Montgomery County for a Mandatory Referral review and approval by the Montgomery County Planning Board. The Planning Board must also review the widening, extension, relocation, narrowing, abandonment or change of use of any road, park, or public way and the acquisition or sale of any land by any public board, body, or official.

For projects that require submittal for Mandatory Referral, the Concept Plan Review shall occur prior to that submittal and the approval of the concept plan, along with the conditions shall be included in the final Planning Board decision. Planning Board decisions to approve impacts to park property and the associated conditions are binding and will be requirements of the Park Construction Permit approval.

For projects not required to go through Mandatory Referral, a concept approval letter will be issued to the applicant once design plans align with the Mission, Vision, and Values of the Montgomery County Department of Parks. Steps must have been taken to reasonably address the Policy for Parks and include sufficient detail showing compliance with comments provided throughout the review process. The concept approval letter must be included in the Park Construction Permit application to initiate Technical Review. Any divergence from the information provided in the concept approval letter may constitute grounds to rescind or amend concept approval and may result in reevaluation of the project for additional or amended conditions and requirements.

The applicant should begin the Concept Plan Review Process as soon as possible in the project design phase. The applicant will need to provide a preliminary concept plan, and a description of the intent and scope of the project, as the information is available. If multiple concept plans exist for a project, all versions should be submitted for review. Submittals should include site plans, facility plans, NRI/SFD, Forest Conservation Plans, and SWM concept if applicable to the project. These materials can be preliminary and in draft form. Projects deemed unacceptable can be denied approval during the Concept Plan Review Process.

After completion of the Concept Plan Review Process the applicant may apply for a Park Construction Permit Technical Review. The Park Development Division of the M-NCPPC Department of Parks issues permits approving work to be done on properties owned or managed by Parks and on properties to be dedicated to the M-NCPPC. Technical reviews of proposed work are provided to check plans for technical accuracy and minimization of impacts to the park properties and users before the issuance of a Park Construction Permit. A Park Construction permit must be issued prior to the commencement of any work on property owned, managed, or being dedicated to the M-NCPPC.