



## Bethesda Market Park Public Meeting Notes

### **Meeting #1: Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 6:30 8:30 p.m.**

[Jane E. Lawton Community Recreation Center](#)

4301 Willow Lane, Chevy Chase, Md., 20815

Project Web site:

<https://montgomeryparks.org/projects/directory/bethesda-market-park/>

Presentation Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICMapVI9kr4>

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### **Purpose of Meeting**

The purpose for this public meeting was to introduce the Bethesda Market Park project located in downtown Bethesda and to solicit ideas and comments regarding the design and possible amenities within the park.

### **Meeting Summary**

Approximately 110 community members attended the meeting along with 11 Montgomery Park staff, four staff from the developer's team and two consulting landscape architects from MPFP.

The meeting started with brief introductions provided by Councilmember Andrew Friedson and Mike Riley, Director of Parks. Linda Komes, Project Manager and Landscape Architect in the Design Section of Montgomery Parks introduced the public/private partnership project, provided background information on recommendations for the new park in the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan and the 2022 Park Recreation and Open Space Plan. The 2017 Planning Board approved Sketch Plan, which included the park and the private portion of the development, along with a general vision for the park and a Preliminary Program of Development, was presented.

Rick Parisi of MPFP, the consulting landscape architect began the main portion of the presentation which included a site analysis, their guiding biophilic design principle, a conceptual spatial relationship plan, pedestrian circulation study and plan, grading studies and many inspirational images of amenities and programming elements from other similar public spaces. The images were intended to spark ideas and conversation. The last slide in the presentation included the next steps with a link to the project web page and an online survey which will remain open until **April 30, 2023**.

Following the presentation there was a period for questions and answers before the meeting attendees split into break out groups for further discussion. Post-it notes were provided for attendees to write down comments which were posted on a white board and are included at the end of these notes. Q&A and Comments

The following is a summary of comments/questions from the Q&A, roughly in the order provided:

- Can you fit in a swimming pool? it does not have to be an Olympic sized pool, just a smaller lap pool for the community. It can take the place of the dog park.  
*-Physical site and budgetary constraints make it infeasible to include a swimming pool on the site.*
- Perhaps it doesn't need to be a pool but could be a splash pad.  
*-Parks is studying the feasibility of providing a splash pad/water feature.*
- Where do you enter the parking garage?  
*-The location of the garage entrance ramps is from Leland Street and Willow Lane.*
- When the park is unprogrammed, how will it be inviting so that it will be safe?  
*-The Park will be well lit, and with the addition of housing along the park there will be many more eyes on the park.*
- How will you treat the Wisconsin Ave crossing to make it more accessible and inviting?  
*-The Wisconsin Avenue crossing will be addressed as part of the mixed-use project.*
- Cyclists are being left out, there is no bike parking or bike sculptures. You must recognize the bike traffic that will be entering the park from the Capital Crescent Trail.  
*-A lot of attention has been paid and will continue to be given to how the park interfaces with the Capital Crescent Trail. We are not yet at the design phase when details such as bike racks and trash receptacles are shown on the drawings but they will definitely be included in the plans for the park.*
- How can I see something that is on the same scale? It is hard to picture the space.  
*-We have many case studies of similar size public spaces which we will share at the next public meeting.*
- Will there be covered spaces from the sun or rain, especially on hot days?  
*-There will be a lot of shade, the focal point/stage area may be covered and could be used during unprogrammed times. The pathways will be lined with trees and include many different types of seating. There will be a shade garden and we intend to plant large caliper trees at the beginning of the project capable of providing shade soon after planting.*
- Any plans to update the Elm St. Playground? What is the timeline for the work on the playground at North Elm Street Park?  
*-At this time, we are under discussion with MCDOT who will be rebuilding the northern portion of Elm St. Park to accommodate the relocated Capital Crescent Trail, including installing a new playground. There are no plans to renovate the southern portion of the Park. It is our intention not to provide a traditional playground in the Bethesda Market Park since there are plans to update the Elm St. Playground-Instead there could be play features such as climbing mounds, climbing walls, climbable art and/or multigenerational swings.*
- How tall will the mixed-use building be?  
*-It will be 70' tall along the park with a 17-storey tower closer to Wisconsin Avenue. Details of the development will be presented in a future public meeting. The team is working on the design of public spaces first.*
- The statue of the Madonna of the Trails should be artistically and architecturally incorporated into the Bethesda Market Park. The 18' tall statue is now on Wisconsin Ave on top of the red line and the vibrations are detrimental. There is currently a petition signed by 750 people on [madonnatrailbethesda.org](http://madonnatrailbethesda.org).

- How long will the Farm Women's Market be closed? How will that affect the livelihood of the farmers? I have heard that they are going to slightly move it, is that true?  
*-The historic building's foundation is failing and needs to be rebuilt. The building will be shifted slightly during this process. The entire project will be phased, and it will take approximately 2.5 years for the north park (on Lot 24) to be built while Lot 10 stays open and available for parking, once that is completed park construction on Lot 10 will begin and is anticipated to be completed late in 2028.*
- Will there be space for a community garden?  
*-There are a lot of areas that would get direct sun, so it could be a possibility.*
- Who will maintain the Park?  
*-The Park will be owned and maintained by Montgomery Parks.*
- Can you use larger mature trees in the areas that are not on top of a structure in Lots 10 and 24?  
*-Yes, it is our intention to plant large caliper trees throughout the site. Because we will have at least 3.5-4' of soil overtop of the garage structure, we will be able to accommodate large trees over the garage as well.*
- I support the dog park. The dog park should be long enough for big dogs to get in a good run. There should also be a covered, shady space and tables and seating so it can also be a place to gather for the dogs and owners to enjoy.
- Can the storm water management facilities be designed as a teaching opportunity to show the community how to manage water and encourage them to do so in their homes? There's a good example at 19<sup>th</sup> and M Streets in DC.  
*-Yes, we intend to do that in one or more locations, if possible.*
- Will the space be activated after dark?  
*-That is a possibility, but we will need to have more conversations about what is appropriate. There could be movie nights, small concerts, and different programmed events.*
- Will Leland Street or Willow Lane be closed like the road is closed through Elm Street Park?  
*-There will be no road closures, but we hope to include traffic calming treatments in Leland Street and Willow Lane at the park using techniques such as pavement changes at pedestrian crossing areas.*
- There are negative environmental effects of artificial turf. Don't use rubber infill.

## Break-out Group Comments

- A lot of repeated support for water features and splash park elements
- Provide a splash pad that could be converted to a skating rink.
- There needs to be activities for winter use of the park.
- Add the word "Women's" to the park name
- Relocate the Madonna of the Trail statue to the Shade Garden area in the NE corner of the park.
- Place another statue next to the Madonna of the Trail for native American women's equal rights
- There should be places to buy food at the Farm Women's Market.
- Should have a shelter area/dance pavilion at the great lawn to accommodate several hundred people.
- Add public art to highlight and promote identity of the park; splash park; dog park; stage on the lawn area - allow the ability to add and remove structures. Referenced the band shell around the farmer's market to the Seaside Development in FL. Consider an exhibition place during construction phase; consider green roof on top of the proposed residential building.
- Support for the idea of pedestrian pavement zones at street crossings.
- Renovate all of Elm St. Park. It is all in poor condition and no longer attracts users.

- Please provide more information about DOT's Capital Crescent Trail project-perhaps provide a link to their project webpage.
- There will likely be cyclist and pedestrian conflicts between the park and trail that need to be addressed.
- 47<sup>th</sup> Street and Willow Lane are insufficient to accommodate the Capital Crescent Trail. It's not inviting, and the road alignments and trail should be re-designed. The park design should favor cyclist flow into the market and park. Trail use should be recognized and celebrated with sculpture and bike-friendly features in the park, including a safe area to park bikes. The north end of Elm Street Park is not active and should be housing, rather than a park. All of the roads in the area should be two-way streets with 15 mph traffic. The new park is a bad idea, will not be active and will only serve the immediate wealthy neighborhood.
- What is a multi-generational active zone, and can some children's play be incorporated? The playground at Elm Street Park is far away and separated from the main park and still needs to be upgraded. It would be nice to have some play at both ends of this long park space.
- Don't pack too much into Lot 10, keep it human scale with space for people. Don't give too much space to dogs.
- Orient the dog park on Lot 10 along the back of the property to run North – South so there's no fence along 46th Street and Walsh St intersection.
- Norwood Park would be a better place for a dog park, as there is plenty of space there.
- Add adult swings and seesaws in the south park multigenerational area so grandparents can play with grandkids; do not add too many structures in the south park - make the structures light and reduce the proportion of the area for dogs and enlarge the area for kids/adults. Add a splash park.
- Small retailers are concerned with parking during construction and the increase in rent prices after new park is completed. An employee of the Opportunity Shop thrift store (volunteered-based organization) along Walsh Street was concerned about the situation of parking and loss of ability for people to drop-off donations in front of the store during the construction phase. Another topic was the future of retailers surrounding the park – They spend \$120K/year in rent plus \$30K goes to community donations. Concerned about the increase of rent for smaller retailers. Are the developers having any economic development strategies to avoid gentrification of the area?
- The back of Lot 10 (western edge) needs to be dressed up, possibly with tables from restaurants
- A man was angry that the format was not as advertised, he had to leave early and was not able to partake in the breakout groups.

## Post-It Note Comments

(Transcribed as written and loosely grouped by topic)

- Water feature for kids to splash!
- Water feature/splash pad-Yes!!!
- Water Feature and Shade
- A Swimming Pool!
- Definitely would like a water feature-not a swimming pool.
- Winter ice skating rink
- No Playground?
- I did not hear or see restrooms?! Locked or unlocked?
- Make sure it's not over designed
- It's too programmed and crowded. Need more peaceful open space!
- Covered Pavilion or structure with roof in case of sudden storm to seek shelter
- Stage area for Summer outdoor movies is a huge positive. Consider directionality regarding sound so pre-emptive about complaints from neighbors.

- Keep the stage area! But add a fountain
- Pollinator garden (or multiples)
- Canopy trees
- Please don't put the statue Madonna of the Trail in this park. It portrays a pioneer woman with a rifle, children at her feet and is regarded by some as racist given the context of battling native Americans.
- Room for Bethesda's Madonna!
- I strongly support putting the statue of the Madonna of the trail in the park where people can see her and appreciate her and be inspired by our female pioneers!
- Move Madonna of Trails to a place near the Farm Women's Market
- Lighting is important! Dark Sky lighting
- Dog Park-Yes!!!
- Dog Park! If the neighbors on the east side object, you could shift the park to all abutting the commercial buildings on the west side.
- Suggest grouping the dog parks closer to Wisconsin Avenue commercial strip and having multi-use recreation area closer to residential area to reduce noise/waste/smell.
- I'd like the south park to be welcoming to come into from the SE corner and walk across to Leland while also keeping a reasonable buffer for the residents nearby.
- Maybe the dog park could be oriented along the western park and active areas along the eastern side?
- The restaurants along Wisconsin Avenue near Lot 10 should renovate the rear of their buildings and add outdoor seating/dining to help activate that edge of the park!
- Please keep the Farm Women's Market name! It will be the 100 year anniversary in nine years and important it is really recognized historically.
- Thank You For This Park!
- Connect Park to Purple Line to improve accessibility
- Multiple Capital Bike Share (Cabi) Stations
- Need a pedestrian bridge over Purple Line at Pearl St. So many BCC kids need it.
- How will the park be seen/advertised to folks on the west side of Wisconsin Ave.? What sign(s) will be used?
- Will there be signage on Wisconsin Avenue that states that a park is behind the market? If walking/driving on Wisconsin Ave. it would be helpful to let people know it's there!
- Will there be a community committee involved? We suggest one.
- Refurbish Elm St. Park to match
- Add more planting in Elm St. Park-more flowers
- Keep the gazebo in Elm St. Park by upgrading and improving or rebuilding existing structure.
- Keep the statue of the Lady with the Hoop in Elm St. Park
- Suggest coordination between Market Parks and Elm Street Park Playground/tunnel entrance to ensure unified design elements
- Will this bike path be the only continuous connection from the current CCT trailhead to new eventual section along the Purple Line? Or will bicyclists have access to the Air Rights tunnel? If this is the only access, thoughtful care to allow casual park users a separate and distinguished entrance (even co-located), from multimodal through-users, (also bikers who will be moving at slightly faster speeds). Avoid any safety issues while facilitating unimpeded bike trail use.
- My building backs to Miller Ave. Access to and from our garage is already problematic. The "new" bike lanes on Woodmont and up through Willow add to challenges driving, walking or I did not hear or see restrooms?! Locked or unlocked?