

Community Meeting
Nolte Local Park – Community Garden - Meeting #1
Location: East Silver Spring Elementary School
December 4, 2018

Attendance

Montgomery Parks Staff:

HFEE Division: Michelle Nelson, David Vismara, Holly Thomas,
Park Development Division: Trish McManus
Park Planning & Stewardship: Hyojung Garland
Public Affairs & Community Partnerships: Alex Girr-Borrayo, Erin Pant

Community: An estimated 27 citizens attended including Tim Haverland, President of the East Silver Spring Citizens Association, and Jason Fasteau, local resident and legislative aide to Councilmember Hans Riemer.

Public questions/comments:

Would the proposed garden affect trees in areas?

No, the trees won't be touched, the garden would exist with the perimeter of the current activity building

Does the area receive adequate sun throughout the day?

Yes, the area receives full sun for 6-8 hours per day

Are the gardens locked?

Yes, a combination lock provides access only to gardeners

Will the water source be open to all?

Current plan is it would only be used for the gardens.

Staff will look into multiple comments about need for water fountain at this site, or to ensure current water fountain within the park is working

Multiple comments noted that the proposal for a picnic bench is inside the garden fence – making it only accessible to limited number of individuals in garden program – is not ideal. Would want that accessible to all users of the park.

Will there be electricity available at the site, for power tools?

Likely not, current community gardens do not have electricity, based on size of plots, hand tools should be sufficient.

Will there be a portable restroom?

Another citizen noted there is one now at the park.

Comment from resident that lives next to park - This is a great way to transition from a building not being used to something for the community

How will it be decided who takes advantage of the plots?

Goal is to keep it hyperlocal, grand access to gardens to those that live close to the park.
Methodology for determining plots not yet decided. One option is a lottery.

Will apartment building residents be more targeted to get this information?

Yes, Parks staff hoping to develop an outreach strategy to engage residents in the apartments, possibly working with schools or other organizations to partner.

What is the timeline you are looking at?

This is just an initial proposal, no timeline yet – one expansion took a year and a half. Depends on the design and contractors and work involved after the demolition.

What opportunities are there to offer other ideas for the use of this space?

Residents can propose ideas to the Planning Board to be considered for the Capital Improvements Plan in early 2019. Parks currently doesn't have resources allotted for other park amenities on this site, community would need to go through the Capital Improvements Plan and be considered against other proposed projects throughout the county. The community gardens proposal would come from operational funding source and be able to be implemented faster.

Other ideas mentioned for use of the space include dog park. One resident was interested in Volleyball.

Several comments related to the parks lack of a picnic shelter, and whether this space could address that.

It was noted, that unlike some other potential uses of the space, a community garden should not increase traffic as many gardeners would be able to walk or bike to the site.

Resident noted – they like the idea of focusing on residents in a certain area, residents who touch the park should get first pick.

Several residents reiterated that hope the options for this space will be something more community members can use – Shelter, picnic table, water fountain, than resources locked up and limited to 14-15 residents.

Is there a time limit on how long residents can keep a plot to give more people opportunity?

All gardens have high retention, but this is something staff is looking at, possible one-year membership and open it up again each year so that other residents can take advantage of the amenity.

Could the building be kept and used as Urban farming center, like a maker's space?

At this time, this is not an option. The building has been approved for demolition.

How many spaces would be reserved for people with disabilities or that need special access?

A proportion of the plots (1-2) would be reserved or placed on hold according to our normal protocol across the community garden program.

Did you look at adding in-ground plots as well?

For this location, we are focused on using the building infrastructure, and making the plots accessible so we are not proposing in-ground plots for this site but some residents have noted other possible space in the park for in-ground plots.

Resident commented, proposed size is pretty limited. If the proposal offered more plots, it would be more exciting to the community. Seems like a lost opportunity if the concept isn't expanded.