

## **South Park at Potomac Yards**

### **Meeting #1 Summary**

February 22, 2017 (Wednesday)

Gunston Middle School, 7:00-9:00PM

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**Purpose of the Meeting:** This is the first of four public meetings for the South Park Master Plan. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the project and discuss how the Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan and Design Guidelines will help guide the park's design. The attendees were asked to write down park amenities they would like in the park. City of Alexandria staff also attended the meeting to help answer questions about the former railroad bridge.

#### **Staff Attendees:**

- Bethany Heim, Associate Planner, Arlington County, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- Erik Beach, Planning Supervisor, Arlington County, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- Irena Lazic, Principal Planner, Arlington County, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- Jack Browand, Division Chief, City of Alexandria, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
- Dana Wedels, Principal Planner, City of Alexandria, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

#### **Consultant:** Rhodeside & Harwell

- Kevin Fisher, Principal Landscape Architect
- Qiaojue Yue, Senior Associate
- Rachel Schneider, Landscape Designer
- Sam Shreder, Urban Planner

**Attendees:** Approximately 30 people attended the meeting.

#### **Questions and Answer, Community Discussion:**

The staff and consultant team conducted a presentation, which is posted on the project website. Attendees asked questions during the presentation and after.

- Will this plan include pedestrian access from the Eclipse condo? Staff response: We are still in the early stages, and improving pedestrian access is one of the goals.
- Will this plan include a dog park? Staff response: All programming ideas suggested by the community are being considered. The decision to incorporate a dog park, either in this park or one nearby will be made as part of the master plan process.

- Staff Comment: Arlington County and the City of Alexandria have restrictions for locating dog parks near waterways. This is one reason the bridge cannot be used as a dog park.
- Staff Comment: South Park was remediated via the Virginia Voluntary Remediation Program and was certified as safe for use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Any construction activities associated with the park will follow appropriate soil remediation procedures.
- Staff Comment: City of Alexandria is unable to develop the bridge and Crescent Park until other parcels are developed via the Potomac Yards Small Area Plan.
- Staff Comment: The 4 Mile Run waterway currently exceeds the EPA Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).
- Will contaminated soil be excavated during development of park? Staff response: There is a possibility that construction activities will encounter contaminated soil. The project includes soil testing and any contaminated soil disturbed as part of this project will follow EPA guidelines for mitigation throughout the process.
- Will slope in development area be uniform? Staff response: Unsure right now, the grading opportunities will be explored through this process.
- How wide would proposed bike path be? Staff response: 10 feet wide.
- Will current unpaved, desire-line pedestrian paths be included in design? Staff response: Yes, the connection from the park to the sidewalk at Rt. 1 will be included.
- Can you explain RPA (Resource Protection Area)? Staff response: This is a designated 100' buffer along the waterways intended to filter pollutants from stormwater runoff before they enter the waterway. Development is limited and the goal is to improve this buffer by increasing the pervious surfaces and increase plantings and wildlife habitat.
- Paths under bridge are already as wide as possible, how can they be expanded? Staff response: There are points where expansion is not possible. However, pedestrian and bike paths may be separated in some locations so that the widths of both can be expanded.
- Comment: Woody vegetation has been a problem throughout stream, design must be able to prevent too much from accumulating in site.
- Will a waterfront component be included in the Trail Plan? Staff response: Yes, if the master plan determines that there should be an adjustment to the trail alignment along the water's edge, it may be incorporated into the trail plan.
- How will parking be included in plan? Staff response: The plan will not include off-street parking. There are many County parks that do not include off street parking. Walking, biking, and public transit are encouraged as a means of accessing the park.
- Illegal parking already major problem in area. Not including parking could worsen problem. Public attendee response: People parking illegally get towed - if parking at the Eclipse.
- What's wrong with the site as it currently exists?
  - Kevin Fisher: The plan is to provide a public park with amenities for a broad range of citizens to enjoy. The type of amenities and character of the park will be developed through the master plan process.

- Bethany Heim: If your feedback is to ‘do nothing’ and ‘leave the park as-is’ then that is feedback we need to hear.
- Public comment: We don’t want to lose our (Eclipse residents) backyard community space. There are parks nearby but those are designed for children, not adults.
- Public comment: The dog park should be located further away from water resources to prevent pollution from entering water.
- Are there plans to use the site as a concert stage/theater? Staff response: We are only in the planning phase so nothing has been decided on yet.
- Will location of future meetings be different? Staff response: Yes, we may hold meetings at Gunston Community Center.

**Suggested Park Amenities Posted to the Boards:**

- Posted Comment: I love this informal seating for people who exercise or just want to sit. This could also be an informal meeting [space].
- Posted Comment: Will be hard to have a park bisected by a high speed commuter bike route.
- Posted Comment: How about no grass but plants?
- Posted Comment: Please explore if stream depth would allow for this – it would be great to have this somewhere on 4 Mile Run.
- Posted Comment: Like this ‘boat ramp’ option.
- What about a sand volleyball court?
- This should be a perfect place for a climbing wall.

**Responses to Feedback Form**

Questions #1: Please list the 3 park amenities you would like to see in South Park

- Dog park (mentioned in 12 different forms)
- Open Space (12)
- Connection to water (6)
- Kayak launch pad (5)
- Make more appealing trail path through underpass (3)
- Trees & shrubs (3)
- Benches (3)
- Make more appealing trail path through underpass (3)
- Public art (2)
- Separate bike and pedestrian paths (2)
- Abundant seating (2)
- Picnic tables (2)
- Inclusion of native plant species (2)
- Maintain natural slope (2)
- Barbeque grill (2)
- Movable seating (2)
- Connections to nearby trails

- Playground
- Bathroom amenities
- Event space
- Night lighting
- No dog park
- Include sports facilities
- Maintain EPA standards for potential pollution at site
- Maintain low noise levels
- Sun shelters

Question #2: Do you have other comments to share with the staff and consultant team?

- Don't include dog park (mentioned in 3 different forms)
- Include dog park (2)
- Focus on public safety (2)
- Maintain low noise levels (2)
- Don't develop as child-focused park (2)
- Maximize view of stream
- Keep development costs low
- Redraw Arlington/Alexandria border so it's an easier property to work with
- EPA is currently concerned about contamination levels
- Incorporate current informal desire paths
- As a nearby home-owner, I don't want to see a major path outside my window
- Improve connection to 4 Mile Run

**Next Steps:** The project website will be updated to include today's presentation and a meeting summary. Please visit the project page for more information and to sign up for notifications.