

## **South Park at Potomac Yards**

### **Meeting #2 Summary**

March 29, 2017 (Wednesday)

Gunston Community Center, 7:00-9:00PM

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**Purpose of the Meeting:** The purpose of this meeting is to learn more about the project and to participate in visioning exercises to further determine the preferred mix of park elements and their potential placement. The staff and consultant team will also introduce the park naming process and solicit potential names for 'South Park.' City of Alexandria staff will present information about the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan and future redevelopment.

#### **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)
- 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 15 people attended the meeting.

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

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

- How will the trail be impacted by this design? Staff response: The park master plan will include a multi-use trail that connects Route 1 to the Four Mile Run Trail. This new trail will be ADA accessible and include safety measures to ensure trail users safely enter Four Mile Run Trail.

- Is the power plant on the Alexandria side expected to remain? Staff response: At this time, the Dominion Power substation is expected to go away. However, this is not guaranteed and the project is still being coordinated with the City of Alexandria.
- Will the underside of the former railroad bridge be redeveloped? Staff response: This is a consideration and will depend upon available funds.
- What is the vision for trail development along Four Mile Run? The multi-use trail will help connect the park to the Four Mile Run Trail and the route must be ADA accessible.
- What is the expected pedestrian and cycle traffic along routes through the site? Staff response: Desire lines have formed in the grass showing people want to access Four Mile Run Trail from Route 1. So there will be people using the new connections. County staff have trail usage counts for the existing trails, but it is difficult to anticipate this for new trails. One of the project goals is to improve access and visibility into the park and to Four Mile Run Trail.
- How will people get to the park if there is no available parking? Staff response: Many of parks in Arlington do not have parking lots. The County is a very walk/bike/bus/metro accessible community and staff encourage the public to use alternative modes of transportation, or find public parking near-by and walk to the park.
- How deep is Four Mile Run at this location? Staff response: Four Mile Run is tidal up to Mount Vernon Avenue. This means that water depth is affected by the Potomac River and its tide. Considering tidal fluctuations and the volume of rain fall, the average estimated water depth is between 5-10 feet. Staff and residents attending the meeting have seen kayakers at this location in the past.
- How will the plan address safety concerns? Staff response: The park is currently lighted and the park improvements will include lighting. There are also Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED) principles that will be incorporated into the design. Also, if you see suspicious activity, then call the police or a park ranger.
- How will wildlife interactions be incorporated into the design? Staff response: The Resource Protection Area (RPA) will be improved through ecological plantings that will improve wildlife habitat. Also, the garden beds will use a mix of native and pollinator plants to attract wildlife.

### **Summary of Feedback Forms:**

A survey was distributed after the presentation and participants were encouraged to complete and turn in after the presentation. Design B (Open Space Focused) and C (Ecology Focused) received the most 'votes' as the preferred option.

## Design A – Activity Focused

### Comments Received:

- Because of this, a dog park and contractor parking during the day in this area might not be a bad idea as something of a transitional zone with greenspace between driveway and park.
- Yay for activating activities, but concerned about conflict with trail users.
- Access path from the former trail to the park does not support recreational or transit cyclists. Nobody rides Route 1. Intense use in area will induce conflicts.
- Doesn't take advantage of the unique environmental/ecological possibilities. Too many parks are activity-intensive.
- Too little passive recreation. Too many dogs.
- Con: dog park could become too popular. Pro: could use small area for active play (sand volleyball, half-court basketball).
- Like the idea of the larger dog park but not interested in other activity areas. Want grass (not gravel!) in dog park. Still like the idea of the kayak launch – might set a paddle board launch.
- Dislike – that this is so active.
- There is no parking and lots of other facilities near this park better suited to activities.
- Open water view – like it. Tables – like it.
- Too activity focused.
- I don't like having such an 'active' area on such a small area: the traffic, people, noise, and bikes would interfere with residents of the Eclipse. I'd hate to see a dog park there!
- Dislike: too active in smaller space.

## Design B – Open Space Focused

### Comments Received:

- Better balance between open and intense uses.
- I like the undeveloped space with places for unorganized activity.
- Good balance – good passive recreation.
- Pro: flexible-use lawn—should accommodate play. Con: could be boring if no shade, movable furniture.
- Dog run would probably work (maybe too small). Want grass not gravel.
- Like the idea of open area. Concerned that large plantings will make areas unsafe.
- The ability for some passive space is a positive.

- There is no parking but it is ideal to have people. A dog run would bring out neighbors who have dogs improving the safety. Open space (unprogrammed) is rare in Arlington so this would be nice.
- Terrace water access—like it.
- Right balance. Softens stark LA River look. Allows greater flexibility once Alexandria develops south side of run. Better to wait another 5-10 years.
- Love the open lawn concepts, and shaded walkways, although would prefer move of a mix of idea B & C.
- Dog run or dog park may be a bad investment of space; but I like the open lawn concept. My idea is a combination of B and C.
- Like: balance.

### **Idea C – Ecology Focused**

#### Comments Received

- The idea of native plants with interpretive signage on the sloped area. Would also be interesting to highlight wildlife and birds native to the area.
- Less activity equals less conflict with trail users.
- Dislike—great potential for conflicts at intersection of ramp and former trail.
- I prefer this site. 4 Mile Run provides an amazing opportunity to connect people with tidal and marsh ecology. Fabulous bird watching spot and field science class opportunities.
- Great ecological connection. Needs more human connection.
- Pro: enhances awareness of nature. Con: population growth = pressure for usable lawns.
- Like natural plantings but again concerned that tall plantings leave areas that could be or feel unsafe. Wouldn't walk along at night.
- The natural setting along the water is a positive.
- Like the dog park—stairs—place to fish (doesn't have to be formal) and some small kayak accommodation all in.
- We need more open space for Frisbee, informal games so I like idea B.
- Garden—like it.
- Will look artificial against concrete river.
- Love the nature idea.
- Same as above; I like the absence of a dog park/run and the open lawn/vegetation.
- Like: contemplative, connection to nature.

### **Other Comments Received**

- Directing cyclists to Route 1 serves no recreational or transport uses.
- Route 1 is not suitable for any but the most experienced cyclists. Routes north from this are Potomac Ave and ramp should not force a U-turn.
- Bike trail routing does not seem to consider the reality of actual uses of the routes and trail users.
- Include a bathroom and drinking fountain.

**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.