

Montgomery County Council,

I am writing regarding the proposed Capital Budget for FY23. I want to advocate for the restoration and expansion, if possible, of funding to parks in East County, especially Wheaton Regional Park and Brookside Gardens.

Wheaton Regional Park is situated in the eastern part of the county in a relatively densely populated area, near multifamily housing and served by bus lines on Arcola Ave and Georgia Ave. Glenmont Metro Station is about two miles away. My family lives a few miles south of this park, near the Sligo Creek trail, and we visit the park frequently by bicycle during warmer weather. We have also taken my young child via bike and bike trailer to the park to ride the train or visit the adventure playground. We really treasure our proximity and access to this park.

Because of land use around it, Wheaton Regional Park has a unique opportunity to serve a more racially and socially-economically diverse and relatively less car-dependent population. Money could be earmarked for needed improvements such as social placemaking (e.g. benches, tables) within the park, for instance near the back entrance to Brookside Gardens and in front of Pine Lake. In order to support visits by those who cannot drive their own vehicle, the county could also plan for Ride-On bus service to the park and/or periodic free circulator shuttles from Glenmont or Wheaton metro station. Money should be available for re-paving and expanding bicycle/walking paths as needed, both within the park and leading to it. The county should also allocate funds to ensure complete sidewalk connections leading from mass transit to park entrances on Shorefield Road and Arcola Ave/Orebaugh Ave. These improvements will be necessary to meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In addition to allocating or re-allocating funds to Wheaton Regional Park, the county should also restore monies requested by Brookside Gardens. The gardens are renowned throughout the Washington DC metro area, often making lists of top area attractions. Capital budget allocation could be used to make the gardens more ADA accessible so that more people could enjoy this gem.

Montgomery County's splendid parks are a large part of what makes this county so desirable. We need to make sure these parks are equitably maintained and updated to be accessible for more of our neighbors. This should be an integral part of the county meeting its equity goals. Please reverse the proposed budget cuts and ensure that Wheaton Regional Park and other parks are fully funded in the FY23 budget.

Thank you,

Sanjida Rangwala
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